DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 226 UD 010 118

TITLE	Grouping Students for Instruction in the Plainfield, New Jersey School System.
INSTITUTION	Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. Inst. of Field Studies.
PUB DATE	Jul 69
NOTE	210p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$1.00 HC-$10.60
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Integration, *Community Attitudes, Elementary School Students, Elementary School Teachers, Grouping (Instructional Purposes), Heterogeneous Grouping, Homogeneous Grouping, Secondary School Students, Secondary School Teachers, *Student Attitudes, *Student Grouping, *Student Personnel Services, *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	New Jersey, Plainfield School System

ABSTRACT

In December 1968, Teachers College, Columbia University and the Board of Education in Plainfield, New Jersey initiated a study of the policies and procedures concerning student grouping in the Plainfield School System. As the study proceeded, however, an effort was made to examine other aspects of the operation of the schools which related to the basic concerns which caused the grouping study to be requested. Where possible and appropriate, data have been collected, conclusions drawn and recommendations made that go beyond the question of grouping. In order to highlight the major findings and recommendations emerging from the study, they have been summarized and constitute the first section of this report. The second section provides a descriptive analysis of the present policies and practices concerning the grouping of students for instruction in the Plainfield Schools. A follow-up study of the Class of 1968 from the time the students were in the seventh grade is reported in section three. Student personnel services, with particular attention to grouping, are dealt with in section four. Sections five, six, and seven report the attitudes and opinions of teachers, students, and lay community citizens, respectively. (JM)

ED0 40226

GROUPING STUDENTS

FOR INSTRUCTION

IN THE

PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY SCHOOL SYSTEM

UD010118

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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July 1969

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INTRODUCTION

Contractual Mandate

In December, 1968, Teachers College, Columbia University and the Board of Education in Plainfield, New Jersey, entered into a contract which committed Teachers College "to conduct a study of the policies and procedures relative to the grouping of students for the purpose of instruction in the Plainfield School System." As the study proceeded, however, an effort was made to examine other aspects of the operation of the schools which related to the basic concerns which caused the grouping study to be requested. The common thread which runs through the report is that of grouping students for instruction, but where possible and appropriate, data have been collected, conclusions drawn and recommendations made that go beyond the mere question of grouping.

Procedures Employed in Conducting the Study

The following procedures represent the major ones which were used in collecting data in the study.

1. Extensive interviews were conducted with teachers, administrators, students, community leaders and other citizens.

2. Questionnaires were sent to all teachers and to a random sample (1 out of 19) of all parents of students in the Plainfield schools.

3. Extensive data were extracted from school records.

4. Data were collected from various documents and materials dealing with the Plainfield School System.

5. Subscriptions to local newspapers permitted the team to keep abreast with press perception of the schools and school related issues.

6. Data collected from school records and questionnaires were programmed for computer processing.

7. In the end, the data were analyzed and interpreted as a basis for drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

Organization of the Report

In order to highlight the major findings and recommendations which have emerged from the study,they have been summarized and constitute the first section of this report. The second section provides a description analysis of the present policies and practices related to the grouping of students for instruction in the Plainfield schools. A follow-up study of the Class of 1968 from the time the students were in the seventh grade is reported in section three. Student personnel services, with particular attention to grouping, are dealt with in section four. Sections five, six and seven report the attitudes and opinions of teachers, students and lay community citizens, respectively.

Use of the Report

The initiative for seeing that this report is put to use in the improvement of education in Plainfield rests with the Board of Education. It should also be emphasized that the availability of the report presents a potential opportunity for the Board to work on some other basic conditions in Plainfield in the process of working toward educational improvement. The first such condition which comes to mind is the racial divisiveness which is characteristic of Plainfield. A second is the dissatisfaction and distrust with which a large number of people in Plainfield view the Board of Education. If careful attention is given to the appointment of committees to analyze the report and study educational problems; if clear channels to the Board are established whereby the results of such study are regularly reported; and if the Board makes special effort to keep channels for two way communication open; then the Board will not only be working toward the improvement of education but can contribute to the improvement of race relations, can cause the community (including students) to feel they are a part of educational decision making and can gain further community confidence. It is the hope of the team who conducted this study that the report can be used to achieve such purposes.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY

Events of the recent past have highlighted the many tensions which beset the Plainfield schools and community and have underscored the need for positive approaches to resolving widely acknowledged problems. The issue of grouping at Plainfield High School, the question which prompted the Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education to request a study, was only symptomatic of larger educational and communal controversy. Clearly, grouping as perceived by some, not as a means of facilitating teaching and learning, but rather as a discriminatory technique. Whether this discrimination is perceived as intended or unintended is irrelevant: it is viewed as affecting the quality of education provided for a sizable portion of the pupil population.

Although the focus of the study undertaken was on the policies and procedures relative to the grouping of students for the purpose of instruction, the Teachers College team gathered data from many sources which is felt affected grouping and had a bearing on the educational outcomes. On the other hand, the team was not able and did not attempt to undertake a comprehensive study of the educational quality provided by the Plainfield Public Schools. The resulting study is, as a result, far broader than an examination of the grouping policies and procedures but far from a comprehensive study of a total educational system.

Major Findings

Description of the Present Grouping Plan

The official (undated) Board of Education policy statement sets forth a general objective of optimum development of individual potential, acknowledges difficulties in providing completely individualized programs for every student, but urges that schools:

> Utilize methods of grouping for reading and other skills subjects in the elementary school, and ability grouping in each subject in our junior and senior high schools, where guidance personnel, in cooperation with teachers and administrators help students to make intelligent and realistic choices.

This general statement is supplemented by a December 19, 1967, policy statement on "Integration in the Public Schools" which recognized that there are "many different needs and opportunities for class and subject groupings. In order to meet these needs, there may be classes which can now be called racially imbalanced." The Board's position was that "it is better to have such classes than not; that these classes should have an objective to prepare for the need for fewer such classes." Racial imbalance in classes was reviewed as something which would eventually be eliminated by upgrading the achievement of all.

To the extent possible, school principals in K-4 buildings have attempted to devise a planned heterogeneous grouping. In the spring, every teacher submits to the building principal a list of pupils in his class, noting whether each child (1) was reading at a high, average or low level, (2) had been a discipline problem, (3) was Black or White, (4) was a boy or a girl. Using this information, principals attempt to develop self-contained classes composed of a "balanced" representation of children according to sex, race, and achievement, with discipline problems distributed as well.

In the two fifth and sixth grade intermediate schools, heterogeneous grouping is also followed with a more systematic effort to group for reading and mathematics in a "cluster" plan. Thus, Board of Education policy is followed for heterogeneous grouping except for reading and mathematics with the clusters.

In both junior high schools, incoming seventh grade students are placed in W, X, and Y instructional groups for English, social studies, mathematics, and science. The two criteria used in setting up the groups involve (1) percentile rankings of the students in language and mathematics and (2) the assessment of students by sixth grade teachers and intermediate school principals. The percentile rankings for English and social studies are obtained from results on two standardized tests -- one measuring language ability and the other achievement in vocabulary, reading and other language arts skills. Assignments are presumably subject to periodic review by the guidance counselor and the principal using information submitted by teachers. At the end of each marking period, teachers are asked to submit lists of pupils who might be moved to a higher or lower level class. Eighth grade students continue in the same grouping (W, X, or Y). Ninth grade students follow the same pattern except for those who elected an eighth grade exploratory language course in Latin, French, or Spanish. These exploratory language classes are heterogeneously grouped. Since ninth grade language courses are grouped into W or X categories, the teacher's assessment is really the determining criterion for placement. All other courses follow heterogeneous groupings, including physical education and homeroom classes.

The senior high school has a long history of ability grouping, going back to 1934. Incoming tenth grade students are placed in W, X_1, X_2, and Y groups for English, social studies (elective), mathematics, science, and foreign language. W groups consist of the top 25 per cent of the grade for the particular subject; X_1, the second quarter; X_2, the third quarter; and Y, the lowest quarter. The grouping is based on standardized test scores and teacher assessment of individual performance in the given subject, with more emphasis on the latter. The student Curriculum Book notes: "One way to take care of these individual differences is to divide pupils into 'ability groups' and to modify the courses appropriately so that all pupils are challenged but few (if any) are frustrated by work which is much too difficult for them." The book observes that the method has been developed over a 30 year period, " with improvements and refinements from time to time." Eleventh and twelfth graders follow a pattern similar to that of the incoming tenth graders with the main criteria being student's performance in a given subject as judged by the teachers. "Sectioning Sheets" are completed by teachers for all students who might move up or down in English, mathematics, social studies, science or foreign languages.

Two sets of data were collected which relate to the operation of the grouping system or the results of its operation. These included the extent of movement of students during the 1968-69 year from one ability level group to another and the enrollment of students class by class. The latter data were organized by school, by department and subject, by grade level, by ability group and by individual class, showing class size and percentages of Blacks and Whites.

Mobility data were collected for the eighth grade at Hubbard Junior High School and for all grades at the senior high school in five subject areas - mathematics, science, English, social studies and foreign languages. At Hubbard a total of 64 students had been moved in one or more subject areas. Of the 64, 32 Blacks and 16 Whites moved up; 11 Blacks and 3 Whites moved down; and 1 Black and 1 White moved up and down. At the senior high school a total of 158 students were moved either up or down in one subject area; 26 had moved in more than one subject area. Proportionately, twice as many Whites as Blacks moved both up and down.

Assuming that all students carry an average of four of the five subject areas examined,there would have been 64 student moves in the junior high school out of approximately 1,200 possible moves (5%); in the senior high school, there would have been approximately 210 student moves out of approximately 7,500 possible moves (3%). One must conclude that, whereas mobility is possible, it is exercised to a very limited extent.

Data on student enrollment by class revealed insignificant differences in class size, regardless of ability groups. These data did show, however, that the present grouping policies -- or at least their application -- result in an extremely high degree of racial segregation.

Thus, over a period of years, procedures have evolved which involve both objective and subjective data for organizing classes for instruction. At the secondary level, insofar as can be determined, these procedures have been evolving over the years without attention to racial balance. In fact, there has been little or no attention to assessing the grouping procedures -- even determining the congruence between the consequences of the plan and its implementation. The apparent consequence has been the rash of claims and counterclaims concerning what is and what is not happening. When coupled with lack of trust and confidence, the situation has become increasingly serious.

Student Attitudes and Opinions

In conducting the study of student attitudes and opinions data were collected through interviews with small groups of secondary school students. Student groups interviewed included groups from each ability group level, groups of White and Black student leaders, and groups of Black and White Athletes. The groups were organized by race and Black interviewers interviewed Black students and White interviewers interviewed White students. Following are the major findings:

1. Students generally (both Black and White) felt that students in Y group were not well understood and that the education provided them was inferior to the education provided students in other groups. If this is true, it is understandable that the study team found students in the Y group to be more critical of the school and grouping than other students, since the Y group is composed almost entirely of Blacks. It is understandable that Blacks were generally more critical than Whites.

2. Although a very large number of Black students felt that there were both good and bad teachers, counselors and administrators, they asserted strongly that they thought that counselors, particularly, had discriminatory attitudes toward Blacks. According to students, this often resulted in Black students being placed in lower groups and remaining in such groups than their achievement and ability would merit. (In this connection, a few Black students felt that the "White man's tests" were discriminating against Blacks.)

3. Black hostility was, by and large, toward adults -- administrators, counselors, teachers, and the police-- and not toward the system or the White man. Only "limited hostility" was expressed toward White students.

4. Some White students thought that their grouping plan should be changed but feared that a change might result in an out-migration of White residents and a loss of some of what they considered to be "good" teachers.

5. A number of White students felt that some Black students were hostile, disruptive, and disinterested in school. The White students in some cases, were especially critical of administrators and counselors for catering to these students out of fear.

6. Two suggestions regarding the grouping of students had substantial support among Black students: one was the elimination of grouping; and the other was reducing the number of groups to two -- W and X.

Staff Attitudes and Opinions

One of the factors related to the effectiveness of grouping procedures is that of staff attitudes toward the plan. When teachers favor a particular plan, all other things being equal, the results are favorable. A questionnaire was administered to all staff members aimed at assessing their attitudes toward various aspects of grouping practice and its consequences. Information concerning teaching experience in the Plainfield system, grade level assignment, professional preparation, position, sex, race, subject matter field, and building unit-school assignment was collected in order to provide different bases for summarizing and comparing points of view. Interviews were also conducted with a sample of the staff. Some of the findings were:

1. In general, the staff as a whole indicated that they felt the grouping system is meeting the needs of students "fairly well." They perceived neither inequities nor positive values in the system as it operates within the instructional levels.

2. Income, intelligence and race of students are seen as operating in such a way as to modify the effectiveness of the system. However, the staff believes that the plan has no inherent weaknesses -- it is the variations among students that generate problems. If the plan does not work any better than it does, it is because the students are different from those students for whom the system was originally devised, the staff believes.

3. Three factors are perceived by the staff as having negative effects as achievement: low income, low intelligence, and being Black. Low income is seen as having more of a negative effect than being Black.

4. In its overall estimate of the effectiveness of grouping the senior high school staff views the practice more favorably than do the junior high or elementary school staffs.

5. Younger teachers, whether Black or White, differ in perceptions from the older teachers -- i. e., those with one to three years experience in the system differ from those with ten or more years. The greatest source of difference is between the young, Black junior high teachers and the older, White, senior high school teachers.

6. With respect to factors that should be taken into account in grouping, Black and White teachers differ but there are differences in degree rather than kind. Both Black and White teachers agree that neither sex, location of residence, occupation of head of household, nor his status or prestige among his peers should be taken into account in grouping students. Black and White teachers agree that such factors as student manual dexterity and coordination, his probable future, his health and willingness to speak in class are unimportant criteria. Both Black and White teachers agree that reading ability, social maturity, indication of intelligence quotient, ability

to write English, ability to work with numbers, and the comments and assessments of guidance counselors and/or psychologists should be taken into consideration. On three factors -- reading ability, ability to write English and IQ score, White staff members assign a significantly higher positive value than do Black staff members. Both Black and White staff members agree that racial or ethnic background should not be taken into account in determining grouping assignment.

7. The staff apparently feels that socio-economic factors are very powerful in grouping. Blacks believe that IQ, family economic factors and reading skills are factors contributing to stratification of the student body.

8. Black staff members consistently think that the more objective data, such as test scores, should be given primary consideration in grouping, while White teachers see more subjective teacher judgment as the intervention of professional expertise that takes into account test error.

9. The staff does not believe that the Board has already decided to change grouping practices, (i. e., using the study to support an already reached decision), nor do they think teachers new to the system have reduced effectiveness of grouping practices.

10. Student activities in the school system are viewed as integrated by all teachers groupings, except for the Blacks.

11. Black staff members believe that specialized opportunities for slower learners were most effectively provided for by homogeneously grouping them and that mathematics and foreign language programs are limited to bright students. Other staff members disagree. Experienced teachers, however, indicate strong agreement on the effectiveness of homogeneous grouping but disagree on access to mathematics and foreign language programs.

12. With respect to grouping for attendance, all of the respondents agree that youngsters in elementary schools do not have a feeling of belonging and that the money currently spent on busing could be better used for other purposes. Changing the attendance

area-busing program was supported by all of the groups of staff members except for the Blacks who apparently feel that racial balance is important to maintain. Experienced teachers feel more effective educational results could be achieved through better use of available funds.

13. All respondents agreed that the present secondary school curriculum is too restrictive and that modifications -- including electives, independent study, and interdisciplinary studies -- should be developed. Separate instructional programs for Black and White students are not perceived as desirable by most respondents. The adequacy of the special course on Black history was questioned by most respondents. The adequacy of the vocational program in meeting the expectations of low income parents received a mixed response.

14. Elementary, junior high, Black and White staff members with 1-9 years of experience agreed that the recent disorder at the high school reflected the inadequacy of the system to respond to the needs of the Black population. On the other hand, high school teachers, White staff members and teachers with 10 or more years of experience disagreed that the situation was caused by lack of responsiveness.

15. There was general agreement that the work load of most students was "reasonable" but needed more direction, that students do not have too much school work to complete, and that directed study should replace some homework. Elementary and junior high staff members view the library sources and services as adequate. High school, Black and beginning teachers disagreed as to the adequacy of library resources -- possibly because they may be making greater demands on these services or looking for specialized materials which are not available.

16. There are considerable differences in the perceptions of staff members regarding appropriate marking, reporting and promotion practices. These reflect to some degree the differing instructional practices at each level as well as differences among staff in their standards and perceptions of the pupil population.

17. With the exception of White staff members with more than 10 years of experience, most did not feel that coordination and curriculum articulation in the total school system were effective. All groups felt that student folders, including anecdotal records, were not used in such a way as to have harmful effects for many students. There is general consensus regarding the need for greater articulation and for providing for continuity of learning.

18. All staff groups agree that educational problems begin in the home, with all groupings except for Black teachers agreeing strongly with the statement. With the exception of Black teachers, all groups felt that regular attendance was important. Apparently, Black teachers felt that inappropriate experiences provided by schools meant that regular attendance was really critical.

19. There were conflicting opinions among staff groups concerning student use of drugs and the adequacy of school health services. High school staff and Black staff members agreed that many students begin to use drugs before they enter the junior high school; all other groups disagreed. Only junior and senior high staff members and those with 10 or more years of experience felt that school health services were generally adequate.

20. High school and White staff with 10 or more years experience are concerned with potential damage to the reputation of the Plainfield schools. This group felt that "the demands of the Black population had been unreasonable." Other teacher groups disagreed. There is a pervasive desire on the part of all groups to establish effective school-community relations.

21. All groups agree that staff members are encouraged to innovate. All groups feel that curriculum changes are more apparent than real if judgment is based on what actually happens in the classrooms. Staff members do not perceive school-community action as an effective means of initiating change. Most groups question the adequacy of current in-service programs, although experienced teachers are less skeptical than others.

22. The overall picture concerning leadership, administrative support, in-service education, and effectiveness of teacher participation is a generally negative one.

23. In responding to "strengths and weaknesses of the school system" (requiring writing in their perceptions of strengths and weaknesses), the factor most often listed as a strength was the grouping policy. Many staff members who did comment, observed that the procedures made it possible to meet the individual needs of students at all levels and for students to "compete successfully." Another factor identified by a large number of staff members was the "capable, well informed, conscientious faculty." The only weakness cited as often as the strengths of grouping and the teaching staff was the lack of leadership and direction. Other weaknesses cited included lack of flexibility in the system, an unresponsive teaching staff, the grouping procedures, the busing plan, the lack of specialists, student lack of respect for teachers, absenteeism, the exodus of educated White citizens, lack of curriculum coordination, and minority group dissatisfaction. Finally, the breakdown in discipline and the inability of the system to provide an orderly environment for learning through strict enforcement of regulations concerning student behavior were cited.

The questionnaire identified many problems that probably are not unknown to the professionals and the Plainfield public. The staff members have two basically divergent views about the nature of public education: some view the school program as quite adequate with the pupil population and their families not "adjusting" to it; others view the school program as not adequately serving the pupil population and the Plainfield community with the need for the school to do the "adjusting."

In Plainfield, the differences normally found among staff members -- differences which reflect the level at which the professional works, his years of experience and professional training, and his sex -- are accentuated by and even subordinate to racial distinctions. This may well be due to the fact that Blacks are not dispersed equally among all levels or in all experience categories. Young White teachers who have experiences in the Plainfield system comparable to that of Black teachers, tend to agree with Black staff members on most points.

Pupil Personnel Services

The study team for pupil personnel services concentrated on the guidance departments of the senior high school and the two junior high schools. In these schools, data were collected through interviews held with guidance personnel, with groups of students and with the Special Services Department Head. The major findings were:

1. The guidance staffs in the junior high schools and the senior high school believe that they are expected by others in the system to perform a somewhat narrow function in the planning and provision of education to students in Plainfield schools. Consequently, counselors expect themselves to assume only limited functions. To elaborate, this means that this staff expects and perceives that it is expected to provide some personal, vocational, and educational counseling to individual students (although students are reluctant to take personal problems to counselors). The staff is neither expected to nor does it expect to go beyond this definition of function to actively initiate or participate in decisions affecting school policy that would significantly influence the educational experiences of students. Neither are they expected nor do they expect to have any special responsibility for working with students or parents when crises develop (such as the disruptions in the high school during the past year). Without question, this major finding has implications for organization and communications in decision making.

2. Given the problems of the Plainfield School System, and particularly those related to students, there is every reason to believe that the guidance staffs are so overwhelmed with problems and routine work that they will only be able to make their potential contribution under an expanded concept of function, if the size of the staff is increased, if better coordination is brought about, and if better physical facilities are provided. This is particularly true at the senior high school.

3. Both Black and White students believe that counselors of their own race are more sympathetic and more understanding of their problems, and, consequently, give better counsel than that given by a counselor of the opposite race.

4. It is clear that the guidance staff has little, if anything, to do with the placement of students in ability groups when they enter the seventh grade.

5. Although a parent and his child have the opportunity to reject the judgment of school officials and thus to have the student placed in a group of their choice, they seldom use this option. In fact, there is evidence that the position of counselors is one of strongly encouraging students to accept their professional advice.

6. Although there was variation in degree of enthusiasm for the grouping plan employed in Plainfield, there were no major objections to it, voiced by the guidance staff and, in fact, it received general support.

7. Although the information obtained from the guidance staff suggested that the plan for assignment of students to ability groups had been administered fairly, the students did not feel this was the case. Data from the analysis of the Class of 1968 show clearly that if standardized achievement tests or tests of native ability had been used for grouping, without the inclusion of teacher-counselor judgments or school grades with their subjective dimension, more Black students would have been in higher groups and more White students would have been in lower groups.

Community Attitudes and Opinions

In conducting the study of community attitudes and opinions data were collected through interviews with more than fifty residents of Plainfield. The majority of this group, but by no means all, were representatives of various and diverse organizations in Plainfield. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to a random sample (1 in 19) of the parents of the students in Plainfield schools. Other data were collected from printed materials dealing with the community and the school system. Following are the major findings:

1. Seventy four per cent of Whites as opposed to 30 per cent of Blacks were satisfied with the education their children were receiving.

2. As viewed by majority of interviewees only those students in the top 25 per cent academically get a good education.

3. Interviews with citizens (both Black and White) indicated a belief that "automatic promotion" in elementary schools led to necessity for grouping in high school, and that lenient promotion in high school caused many students to graduate whom they felt should not.

4. A large percentage of Blacks felt that grouping perpetuated racial segregation, that groups determined status, that there was little chance for upward mobility if Black - and that one's feeling of hostility related to his group status.

5. Whites generally believed the school system was doing a better educational job at all school levels than did Blacks.

6. Blacks and Whites felt that the schools were doing the best job for White students, students from high and middle income families, and students with high and average intelligence. However, a significantly larger percentage of White respondents felt that the educational job for students in these categories was done "very well" or "fairly well" than did Black respondents. It is also true that the educational job being performed for students with low intelligence and for students from families with low income was considered to be significantly better by White respondents than by Black respondents.

7. White respondents considered themselves to be better informed about school matters affecting their children than did Black respondents.

8. In response to a variety of practices to improve communication between the school and parents, both Black and White parents reacted with enthusiasm. The percentage of positive responses from Black parents on each item listed, however, exceeded the percentage of positive responses from Whites.

9. Sixty-five per cent of the Black parents and 56 per cent of the White parents expect to live in Plainfield until their children complete high school. However, of the parents who now have children in elementary or junior high school, 60 per cent of the Blacks said they expected their children to attend Plainfield senior high and only 38 per cent of the White so indicated.

Study of the Class of 1968

A retrospective longitudinal study of the Class of 1968 (from seventh grade on) was undertaken to ascertain how the students in that graduating class had fared according to specific indicators. These indicators are ones which are normally used to judge educational quality

In 1962-63, 564 students entered the seventh grade. A total of 231 students transferred into the class in the intervening years for a potential "graduating class" of 795 students. During the six-year period, 183 transferred out (to private school, moved away, institutionalized, still in school, or disposition unknown) of the group, leaving a net potential graduating class of 612 students. In June 1968, 467 students (76% of the net total) graduated; 145 students (24 % of the net total) dropped out. The major findings concerning the class were as follows:

1. While Plainfield's dropout rate is at about the national average, one in every four students who starts seventh grade is not graduated. In 1964, nine of ten students completed school so that the so-called "holding power" has been decreasing.

2. Of the 795 students in the class over the six-year period, 253 were identified as Black and 431 as White. Of the remaining 111, 8 were identified as belonging to "other" races and 103 could not be classified since photographs were missing. The graduation rate for Whites (84%) was noticeably higher than the rate for Blacks (75%).

3. The intact families for both races was high. However, differences in fathers' education and occupation are dramatic, with a clearly significant socio-economic differential between Black and White students.

4. For both groups, Black and White, test score averages over the six-year period improve due primarily to loss of students who leave before graduation. The most significant finding is the similarity of the data from test to test and grade to grade. White students are strikingly superior to Black students on these measures of scholastic ability -- roughly two-thirds of White students tend to be above national medians while two-thirds of the Black students were below national medians.

5. With respect to ability grouping classification, the result indicates that there is de facto tracking. At grade seven, 24 per cent of the cohort are in classes of mixed ability levels; this mix is reduced to 7 per cent at grade 10 and 4 per cent at grade 12. Over the six-year period, relatively little assignment of students to classes of differing ability levels after junior high school and relatively little shift over time in students' assignments to groupings took place.

6. As for racial composition of ability level groupings -- 1 of every 10 students in a "high" group is Black; 3 of every 10 students in a "middle" group were Black; and 1 of every 10 students in the "low" groups were Black. There is little question that students in the upper and lower ability grouping assignments were in essentially segregated classes.

7. Given approximately the same score on one test of academic ability or achievement, the placement of White students in ability groupings is consistently at a higher level than that of Black students. Whatever additional criteria for assignment are used (i. e., more than one standardized test, teacher grades, motivation, teacher recommendation, student wish, etc.), these operate to lower the level of Black students to ability groupings below the level which would have resulted if any one of these tests had been used as the sole criterion.

8. Although a weighting system has been devised in order to provide a spread of scores in each ability grouping level (the weighting presumably is used to determine "rank in class"), the modal grade for students in the lower ability level is considerably lower than the modal grade for the higher ability level groups. Whatever the actual intent, the result is that the grading system operates to weed out those students of lower ability (or at least in lower ability groups) and contributes to their not continuing in school. The extreme in this practice is found at the 10th grade level where in the class of 1968, 89 students out of 139 students (64%) in the Y group received marks of D, E, or F.

9. The proportion of students who are absent 25 or more days in grades 7, 10 and 12 rises markedly from grades 7 to 12. The proportion of Black students having this or higher absence rates is consistently higher than the proportion of White students. Three out of 10 Black students were absent 25 or more days in the 12th grade -- a remarkably high proportion suggesting a less than happy or meaningful educational experience. The high absence rate of Black students suggests considerable alienation with the school.

10. Grades for Black students are consistently lower than those for White students. In grade 10, 35 per cent of the total cohort, regardless of race, had modal grades of D-F suggesting some sort of "academic breakdown" in that year.

11. In summary, data on the Class of 1968 suggest that for substantial numbers of Black and White students, Plainfied provides a largely segregated school experience and an unrewarding and unhappy school experience.

How well were the students in the Class of 1968 served by the Plainfield secondary schools? Data on post-secondary activities are not available to determine how the students did with respect to college going, work experience, career orientation, etc. Given the same potential, was the White student served the same or differently from the Black student? The data suggest that White students were placed in the "higher" ability groupings, followed "better" course sequences, did better on standardized achievement tests, and received higher modal grade scores, despite a weighted grading which was presumably operative. If racial isolation is a significant factor affecting achievement, "more" able White students and "less" able Black students were in largely segregated classes. If attendance in school is an indication of perceived relevance of the program and satisfaction of experience, many students -- both Black and White -- had such high absentee rates as to suggest that the secondary school experience was unrewarding and unhappy. While the grouping plan above cannot account for this condition, it obviously contributes to the overall result.

Major Recommendations

The recommendations which follow are based on the analyses and interpretation of the data, combined with the observations and impressions of the study team. The recommendations are not arranged under topical headings but are grouped in terms of closest relationships.

In the early part of the 20th Century, the classical program of the Latin school tradition so prevalent in American schools, the increasing industrialization of the national economy, and the influx of immigrants posed major policy questions for the public and for the professionals in the public school system. The schools responded to the situation by instituting an extensive vocational education program that became a rather permanent part of the comprehensive high school that we know today.

At the mid-point of the century, the child-centered approach to curriculum, the post-industrial technology, and international political activities again challenged the public school system as many laymen listened to the news of Sputnik and pointed a finger at the public schools. Again the nation responded with massive support programs for mathematics, foreign languages, science and guidance services -- all designed to foster the preparation of employees to benefit technological development and the now almost completed cold-war race to the moon.

At the moment, the public school system is being challenged by the poor and minority groups that by and large have not been full participants in or beneficiaries of achievement of the American society. These groups still firmly believe that the same system that furthered industrialization and nurtured much of the expertise necessary to reach the moon can also help them overcome whatever handicaps and injustices they may now have or experience.

The policy question for the public and for the profession is not whether the schools can respond, as the system has clearly responded to societal problems in the past. The question is whether the system will respond, and if so, with what degree of wisdom. In essence, this is the question posed by this study of the grouping policy and practices in the Plainfield public schools. It is clear that when the public schools faced the problems of industrialization and technological advances, they did not look only to grouping practices as a solution.

To begin with, more than 50 years of research and experience with grouping serve as a backdrop for considering the Plainfield data. Certain generalizations can be made about grouping which can be supported by past research and by data from Plainfield schools. These are:

1. There is no such thing as a homogeneous group. It is possible to narrow the range with respect to a few variables but the range will still be great on other pertinent characteristics.

2. Grouping is a method of organization and not a method of instruction. Each learner brings into the classroom with him certain potentials, values, attitudes, aspirations, perceptions, and emotions which color what and how he will learn. If the organization (group, class or school) institutionalizes expectancies by classifying and labeling pupils; freezes into molds and structures; condemns some pupils while encouraging and aiding others -- it represents an inappropriate practice, both educationally and morally.

3. Learning is not uni-dimensional -- Fast, slow, average. Many other factors than "intelligence" (as measured by so-called IQ scores) determine the nature and quality of learning. Use of a single criterion for placement in groups is questionable.

4. Individualization and differentiation of instruction require considerable flexibility in arranging the conditions for learning. These include staff, resources, time, space, relationships.

These four generalizations suggest that the basic issue in Plainfield and elsewhere is not one of homogeneous vs. heterogeneous grouping, nor of tracking vs. non-tracking. Instead, the questions which need asking are those which deal with the diagnosis and understanding of individual differences, flexible grouping arrangements, optimum conditions for learning, use of personnel and resources in ways that open doors for learning for all students -- the enthusiastic and the apathetic, the committed and the alienated, the talented and the less talented -- because this is what public education is all about.

All of the above suggests that while changes should be made in the grouping procedures used, the more important focus must be on the total educational process -- what is taught to whom, when, under what conditions, with what means for assessment. Grouping procedures have validity only if they facilitate instruction. Consequently, various kinds of grouping and regrouping are necessary for helping to implement planned variations in content and method. The administrative grouping of students must be tailored to the specific needs of curriculum and instruction.

The question of grouping and the recommendations that are being made concerning prudent modifications, therefore, must be seen in their proper context -- as a necessary, but insuffıcent response. The curriculum that is the substance of education and the interaction between students and the professional staff that give life to that substance must be closely assessed. This study team was not asked to do so although it obviously made inferences from what it did do.

It is recognized that the public school system has two major functions: unification and differentiation. The program of studies designed as general education for all students is commonly accepted as intended to meet the needs for unification. On the other hand, specialized courses designed to meet the needs of only some students, such as physics, chemistry, French IV, calculus, and vocational auto mechanics, are intended to serve the differentiation function. When the program of studies in general education, such as required English and social studies courses, are homogeneously grouped they are converted into specialized courses for sub-groups of students. The end result is that there are few experiences that serve the unification function.

The consequence of such an organization is that there is a lack of dialogue among major segments of the school community. In the absence of dialogue between teachers and parents, teachers and pupils, and among teachers, each individual operates on an information base that is inadequate for decisions and judgments regarding action that involves inter-dependent behavior, as most educational policy decisions in fact do. At present it appears that too frequently Black teachers know Black parents and talk to Black students; White teachers, many of whom are non-residents, know few parents at all and talk primarily to White students and White teachers.

In the opinion of the study team, the grouping policy and practices tend to support and nourish the stratification of staff and students. It is firmly believed that as a response to the current social situation in Plainfield the grouping policy must be modified and that unless such modification does take place, more meaningful substantive modifications are not likely to occur.

The study team believes that specialized courses designed to fulfill the need for differentiation already enroll a fairly narrow range of students in terms of overall ability, interests, and achievement and, thus, extensive homogeneous grouping for these courses is not necessary. For general education courses designed to fulfill the function of unification, extended homogeneous grouping subverts the educational purposes for which the courses were originally designed.

1. It is recommended that the grouping policies in the Plainfield schools be altered to facilitate implementation of curriculum modification which must be undertaken. At the elementary level, the planned heterogeneity should be continued with flexible grouping for instructional purposes within classes. Non-graded, continuous progress, individualized programs should be explored. However, such programs are organizational means only, aimed at facilitating instruction. In-service training, curriculum development, and resource development are needed if such instruction is to be successful. Continuous assessment and diagnosis are needed if the elementary grades are not to continue as part of a sorting out process for secondary programs.

At the junior and senior high school levels, grouping in the required or general education courses should be designed for students at both extremes: the very able and those who are substantially less able in a particular area. For the great majority of students who fall within these extremes, it is proposed that students be grouped heterogeneously without regard for the criteria used in the past for assignments of students to groups. As a second-best, policy might be established whereby this majority of students would be placed in either of two ability-achievement levels, subject by subject. It should be emphasized, however, that high priority should be placed on the results of standardized ability and achievement performance in identifying students at the upper and lower extremes as well as in the assignment of students in the large middle groups (if this is opted for) rather than relying as heavily, as the system has, in the past on subjective evidence. Such groupings should be flexible, designed to facilitate individualization and differentiation of instruction.

Whatever decisions as to groups are made, the study team feels strongly that no students should be grouped in the required English and social studies courses. In fact the system is urged to develop a non-graded plan for student enrollment in those courses. In this and other subjects, appropriate use should be made of large-group, small-group, and individual instructional procedures.

Two additional points: first, any grouping plan must be fluid and permit movement of students from one group to another with minimum effort. In fact, students and staff should be constantly aware that a disservice is done when movement of a student from one group to a more appropriate group is delayed. Second, the right of the parent to reject the advice of the school and have his child placed in another group should not only exist, but should be widely publicized and encouraged.

Whatever the intent of the existing grouping policies, a de facto tracking has resulted, tracking which is racially imbalanced as well. The perceptions of grouping at the junior and senior high levels held by students, staff and the public has had serious consequences on achievement, morale, and community relations which must be tackled head on.

2. It is recommended that an extensive, clearly focused in-service education program be developed for all staff members -- teachers, administrators, ancillary services personnel, aides and paraprofessionals, secretaries and custodians. The questionnaire responses indicate in-service and continuing education needs of many different kinds -- e. g., instructional program development, community orientation, interpersonal and intergroup relations. The integrity of the system and its ability to provide for individual satisfactions as well as organizational goals is being seriously questioned by a large number of staff members. Only through direct, sincere action and administrative support will the system move forward with the support of the staff, the students, and the community. In-service education must be provided for developing new skills, insights, and understandings, as well as for changing attitudes, commitments and involvement. In-service opportunities must be both responsive and relevant to the system's needs; the routines of the past were neither.

A change in grouping policies without full attention to instructional needs -- curriculum, teaching strategies, resources use, staff development -- would have little real impact. Sensitivity to the staffing needs has implications for personnel recruitment and assignment as well.

3. It is recommended that structural and procedural changes be made which will provide for new bases and opportunities for teacher-student interaction. Since behavior is affected by the structure, time-space-personnel allocations must be changed if new behavior is to be encouraged and expected. Structural changes should focus on the context provided for

student-student, student-staff, teacher-teacher, and teacher-administrator interaction under new circumstances. A new context for student grouping should reflect student needs and specialized activities designed to meet those needs. There is a clear need for new types of courses, new ways of using staff differentially, and new types of relations for instruction. Student participation in development of such programs and relationships is essential.

4. It is recommended that new types of courses (e.g., mini-courses) be designed to take advantage of specialized competencies of staff members and community personnel. Such mini-courses would provide different bases on which students and instructors might group themselves for different educational purposes. The courses would be for different periods of time and have different foci from traditional courses. These courses would be initiated by teachers and students with the entire program coordinated by a joint student-faculty committee. Mini-courses could be converted into instructional units for inclusions in regular curriculum, created into longer courses, and satisfy academic requirements. Such courses could alleviate some of the stratification among students and faculty.

5. It is recommended that high priority be given to providing the administrative leadership needed in re-designing the program for the new high school. Plainfield has a significant opportunity to re-design its secondary school program with the building of the new high school. A position should be created to provide the necessary administrative leadership at this critical time. Administrative leadership will require using the personal resources of the school and community. Advisory groups of students, staff, and citizens should be involved in program development for the new building.

6. It is recommended that opportunities for improved communication be increased with greater emphasis on including younger staff members in the decision-making processes. The attendance area-busing plan tends to decentralize people and programs, increasing the need for internal communication. Information flow is blocked or impeded at many levels. There is a need for professional meetings which involve several schools which might use building sub-groups, interest groups and other arrangements to open communication channels for the school system as a whole. Student-staff-central administration-board communication should be regularized not for information sharing alone but for problem definition and solution.

7. It is recommended that staff and citizens be helped to become more knowledgeable about the schools and more sensitive to the community through more frequent contacts in school and community settings. Study and task forces should be either initiated or legitimized by Board of Education action to conduct investigations and where appropriate, report back to the Board.

With careful thought to the appointment of such groups and the tasks which they would perform, parent-teacher-student interaction could be enhanced, cooperation between races could be increased, the feeling that citizens don't have organized ways of communicating with the Board of Education and the administration could be alleviated etc. For the same purposes similar groups might be established within school districts and become advisory to the local school as well as the Board of Education where information for the Board or Board action are considered important.

8. It is recommended that the guidance staff be given an expanded role in planning and implementing plans for student development. The principal change needed in the guidance departments is a change in the scope of their responsibility. The guidance departments should be given an important, though not exclusive, role in attending to pupil emotional, social, intellectual, and vocational development and actively proposing activities and changes in the system to enhance these aspects of development. Under such a conception of the department's responsibility, counselors would continue to counsel individually and in groups, to work with larger groups for information-giving and discussion purpose, to provide an educational and occupational information service, etc. However, a new kind of responsibility would be added which would result in a basic change in their orientation to their work and the school's expectations of them. A new image and new relationships are needed for the guidance personnel. While they cannot be held responsible for this interpersonal tensions which exist, with training and reorientation, they can play different roles.

For example, suppose the impact of grading practices on students came to the attention of counselors, as surely it must. One possibility is to counsel individuals or groups who are not faring well in school. Another possibility is to collect data on such practices, propose a meeting of relevant persons to consider the grading practices themselves. Or suppose that counselors notice that substantial numbers of students are not finding a place in the extra-curricular program of the school. They could (and perhaps should) urge individual students who have special need for social development to join a school club or other activity; but they could also study student involvement in the program and its apparent effects and again, recommend group study directed at program improvement. Or take the crucial matter of strained relations between Black and White students, preferably at a point where tensions are less than at present; again the guidance departments would be expected to initiate study discussion and action to improve intergroup relations, since pupil development is centrally involved.

The illustrations are not intended to suggest that no one else should attend to matters such as these; but they are intended to suggest that a guidance department should be strongly oriented in this direction. These increased -- and charged -- expectations of the guidance departments would require a serious commitment to sharing decision-making powers in the Plainfield school system far more widely than they are now shared.

9. It is recommended that attention be given to means for generation and free flow of ideas by making the system responsive to such ideas. The insistence on an upward flow of ideas would not be confined to the guidance departments, of course. All departments and sub-groups in the school would be expected to generate ideas and plans. The foci of their concerns would vary, but there would be considerable overlap. In short, guidance departments would often be initiating ideas or proposing plans in conjunction with non-guidance personnel. Productive staff interaction would increase appreciably.

10. It is recommended that a committee of teachers, students, and parents, as well as counselors, representatives from special services, and possibly an administrator should be established as a cabinet focusing on pupil development, not just the functioning of the guidance department. Its purpose would be to study aspects of pupil development, set in motion ideas, and possibly formulate proposals. In the doing, it would involve others, and suggest new ways of attacking problems of pupil development, possibly even reorganizing itself in the process. It is intended as a "starter" committee, not necessarily the eventual structural arrangement.

There are practical needs for counselor personnel, clerical personnel, and space; for greater coordination of pupil personnel services, possibly by appointing an overall director; and for more flexible hours for parents. These have all been proposed by interested groups, and many were suggested by counselors in interviews. If the orientation and functioning of the guidance departments can develop along the lines suggested in this recommendation, these needs will be critical and provision for meeting them should be made.

11. It is recommended that a systematic program of "quality control" be developed for continuous monitoring of educational experience for individual students and groups. Such an evaluation and assessment program, responsibility for which should be assigned to a system-wide office but which would involve students, faculty, counselors, administrators and parents -- should provide data which would be used to modify and adapt programs continuously rather than on a crises basis. Some of the techniques used for gathering data for this study (e. g., the study of the Class of 1968) could be used on an ongoing basis to supply information for modifying instructional programs, in-service activities, administrative arrangements, and resources.

Like most school systems, the Plainfield schools routinely collect and record a considerable amount of information about their students. But also like most school systems, the purposes served by these data are largely limited to demands imposed by external agencies. As a result, the student records now contain a wealth of data that could be extremely useful to the system in monitoring its practices and in making policy decisions, but which is not currently exploited. Moreover, during recent years, the schools have employed sophisticated IBM data processing equipment and procedures in order to schedule students and teachers and to compute class rankings, grade averages and test scores. These procedures give the system the technical capacity to carry out the type of analysis that we propose.

For example, the schools keep attendance records for each student. These are used primarily for presenting average daily attendance records to the State. Standardized tests are administered at many different times during the students' careers. These help to determine placement and progress of the students within the system, and they are also used in recommendations to colleges and universities. In addition, test scores are frequently aggregated so that the Plainfield students can be compared with national norms. Letter grades received by all students are carefully recorded and used to assess progress and to place individual students both within and outside of the system. Finally, records are kept of where students go after completing high school, and a summary of higher education data is sent to the State Department of Education each year for the class that has most recently graduated from high school. The schools also collect information about family composition and educational and occupational status of parents. It is not clear what uses are currently made of this information.

Two primary purposes could be served by analyzing school records more systematically:

1. Monitoring existing school practices:

No public institution can be successful in meeting all its goals, and our examination of the school records in Plainfield produced a number of findings suggesting that the schools have been unable to effectively implement some of their state policies. For example, only very small proportions of the students in secondary school were attending classes at more than one ability level; movement from one level to another was infrequent; and high grades were seldom given to students in Y classes. These facts would have already been known to the system if it had regularly analyzed the relevant available records.

2. Identification of deviant cases and potentially troublesome situations:

If the school system regularly investigated the relationships among and between the different types of information that it collects it would be possible to quickly ascertain whether or not there are certain individuals or groups for which expected relationships do not hold. For instance, there may be some individuals or groups with high test scores and low ability group placement or vise versa. Similarly, relationships between test scores and letter grades or between attendance and letter grades could give a rough indication of the differential impact or relative "success" of the schools with various individuals and groups.

Such systematic examination of available records could also help prevent the schools from being forced to assume a defensive stance in response to external criticisms. By examining the relevant "hard data" from school records the schools could often identify the areas where changes are indicated and refute criticisms that are not warranted.

It should be emphasized that "quality control" of existing practices and programs cannot be wholly dependent upon the examination of existing records. An effective evaluation and assessment program must also include evaluative responses from teachers, parents, and students. Often these are most useful when individuals are confident that they cannot be identified. The schools could easily sample the opinions and responses of parents, teachers, and students on a regular basis without disrupting the system, and such procedures would guarantee that all groups would have proportionate weight assigned to their responses and that each opposing faction could not claim to represent "the community." In this way the schools might gain welcome relief from the pressure tactics to which they are often subjected and dissident voices could more easily be placed in proper perspective.

Implementation of the Recommendations

The Teachers College study team found evidence of a lack of confidence on the part of segments of the Plainfield community in the Board of Education, the central administration, and some members of the professional staff. "The Board" -- meaning the Board of Education or central staff -- is perceived by many individuals and groups as being unresponsive to community concerns, defensive with respect to present programs and practices, and insensitive to requests for action. This view is symptomatic of pending crisis because the Board of Education is the focal group in providing the prime leadership source at this critical juncture. Since the recommendations call for policy changes which are the Board's prerogative, careful study of the report should provide the Board of Education with the basis for a clear statement of intent.

The Board of Education normally relies on its chief administrative officer, the superintendent of schools, for counsel and for leadership in implementing policy. The Plainfield Board of Education, now in the process of selecting a new superintendent of schools, should discuss the report with candidates to ascertain their views concerning the basic issues raised. In the meantime, the Board of Education would do well to share with the Plainfield public its plans with respect to the general recommendations of the Teachers College team for new movement within the school system. A schedule for regular reports to the public and the staff should be established and adhered to by the Board. In short, the manner in which the Board of Education responds to the recommendations will be viewed by the Plainfield public as an indication of how the Board intends to move ahead in the next few years. The public needs and is entitled to a timetable and progress reports.

This report deals basically with policies and procedures for grouping for instruction. It does not limit itself to the administrative organization for grouping but deals with some of the significant elements of instruction which must be considered in relation to organizational procedures. The recommendations are not sequential nor does one have greater priority than another. It is both possible and desirable that a start be made on implementing all of the recommendations now. Some recommendations involve policy changes; all involve changing personnel skills, understandings, insights and attitudes. Some recommendations require different use of resources -- personnel and material. The recommendations cannot be fully implemented by September but a start can be made, a schedule developed, and the public can be reassured that the individuals who have the power to affect change are indeed desirous of doing so.

The fact that the Plainfield School System does not have a contract with its teachers'association at the time of the completion of this study, and that it has vacancies in some of its top professional posts, is a serious problem. In-service programs, administrative changes, program development: all these must be restricted until the contract is negotiated. A realistic timetable should be established to move ahead as rapidly as possible when the issues are resolved. Yet, a consideration must be recorded: the professional staff was given copies of the preliminary report of this study only on the last day of the 1968-69 academic year. Therefore, efforts should be made to set aside at least one full week prior to the opening of the 1969-70 school year for study, planning, and in-service training by and for all teachers, in addition to similar work and experience which may be made possible earlier in the summer of 1969.

By its very nature, a study of this kind looks for "soft spots" and details only its criticisms. While the Teachers College team found serious problems which it has tried to highlight in this report, the team concludes its report with a feeling that quality education for all in Plainfield is a real possibility if all those involved -- the public, the pupils, and the profession -- approach the task of rebuilding the schools with a measure of good-will and confidence. It is the Board of Education and the Plainfield professional staff which must show the way.

CHAPTER I

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF GROUPING FOR INSTRUCTION IN THE PLAINFIELD SCHOOLS

Common Grouping Practices

Grouping of students for instructional purposes is a common practice throughout the world. Some form of grouping is necessary whenever there is more than one student to one teacher. but grouping is arranged not only for economy, but also to simplify conditions for teaching, and to improve the quality of learning. In introducing this report on grouping in the Plainfield Schools, some of the more common grouping practices in use in the United States will be mentioned, and opinions and research relative to their merits or disadvantages presented. Hopefully this will provide a setting for the discussion of current practices in Plainfield.

In the one-room rural schools of early America, teachers often had students in one room who ranged from five or six to eighteen or twenty years of age. They were taught individually, or in small groups, based on age or level of achievement, and subject area. Thus, one teacher worked with many groups within his class in a single day.

As schools increased in size, the German system of grouping by grade level was introduced. This tended to bring children of one age level together in a single grade. However, failure rates were high in the early graded schools and most class groups included a number of over-age students. The range in achievement for the students in any one grade, as measured by standard tests often ranged from three to six years. Bringing a random sample of such an age group into a single classroom has been referred to as heterogeneous grouping. Variations among students in levels of achievement tend to increase as they move upward through a school system, thus complicating the task of adjusting to these differences.

Efforts to adapt instruction to individual differences have been a continuing characteristic of American schools. Often this has taken the form of grouping students on some basis that would reduce the range of differences within a single group and thus facilitate planning for the specific learning problems of those included. Probably the most common forms of grouping in use are (1) the groupings by achievement or ability within a grade group when the numbers permit having more than one section or class, and (2) grouping by achievement or learning difficulty within a class for specific periods of instruction. Both of these forms of grouping are intended to achieve a measure of homogeneity or at least reduce the heterogeneity. Each will be elaborated briefly.

Grouping within a grade group is often conditioned, in part, by the total enrollment in a grade. Thus, with sixty children in a grade, a high and low group of thirty each might be developed. If there are 300 children in a grade, ten groups of thirty each might be created by dividing the total range of ability or achievement into ten levels.

Grouping within a class, for specific periods of instruction, is often arranged regardless of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the total group. Thus, a teacher may create two or three groups in reading or arithmetic based upon learning difficulties. While the teacher works with one group directly, on reading, one or more other groups work independently on tasks assigned by the teacher or on free choice activities.

There are still other forms of grouping than the heterogeneous, homogeneous, and within-class grouping. One form that has received much attention recently and has been given various labels, completely disregards grade lines and groups children homogeneously by level of achievement or type of difficulty in specific subject areas. There is probably no need to describe these forms more fully, as information about them is not essential to an understanding of the current situation in Plainfield.

Many considerations of grouping give little attention to the underlying curriculum assumptions. In some instances all children are expected to cover approximately the same topics or activities. The main adjustments are in the time devoted to covering the prescribed program. In other instances there are substantial adjustments in content or goals, in methods of teaching, and in the books and materials used with varying groups.

Contrasting Views of Grouping

The relative merits of various forms of grouping have been the focus of much debate and of substantial amounts of research for almost half a century. Conflicting opinions have been held over a long period of years and divergent practices have been continued without supporting evidence. Variations in practice reflect such diverse considerations as sincere differences in educational values, a concern for ease of teaching and administration, and conviction as to the efficacy of the practice followed. The evidence on the matter is not clear-cut and firm in one direction or another. In fact, some of the issues are extremely difficult to handle from a research standpoint. Following paragraphs will seek to state and describe current viewpoints. Attention will be directed first to heterogeneous and then homogeneous grouping where much of the focus has been centered on academic learning and on teaching arrangements which facilitate learning. The personal and social consequences of grouping have long been debated, but have taken on new dimensions in recent years. These will be summarized briefly. Finally, the legal aspects of grouping will be introduced.

Heterogeneous Grouping

When the size of a student group in a grade or subject does not permit having more than one teacher, it is natural to have a heterogeneous group. As already noted, the one-room rural school, including all ages and grades, may represent the maximum in heterogeneity. However, in recent years, the term has come to be applied to the group assigned to one teacher in a specific grade level or subject. As already mentioned, this might include students of a very wide range in respect to intelligence and achievement. Many educators have strongly urged this plan at the elementary school level, and have assumed that the selection of courses and programs at the secondary level would care for the problems of diversity as they become more extreme at this level.

Levine (1968) has summarized the arguments presented by the proponents of heterogeneous grouping in the following manner:

> 1. Placing students in "slow" or even regular classes tells students they are not as capable as some of their classmates. No matter how much the school tries to disguise with euphemisms the fact that students in some classes are slower than those in others, the students in the non-accelerated classes tend to identify themselves more or less as "dullards," and are so identified by others. As a consequence their desire to work hard in school is greatly reduced.

2. Because teachers of bright classes know that their students are generally high in ability, they will tend to give fairly high grades even to those students who are not performing near the limits of their capacity. Thus many of the brighter students will achieve at a lower level than they would in a heterogeneous classroom.

3. Without the leadership of the brighter students, the teachers of regular and slow classes will find it difficult to draw correct and stimulating responses from the group. As a result, instruction will become more teacher-centered, and students will tend to lose interest.

4. Teachers of classes without a few bright students will lack the satisfaction of seeing some of their students succeed at a higher level, and this will greatly reduce their resolution and effectiveness.

5. Even after students are grouped according to criteria such as I.Q. achievement scores, and previous grades, the range of ability and previous achievement in supposedly homogeneous groups will still be so great that little, if anything, has been achieved toward overcoming the alleged ill-effects of heterogeneity.

"Heterogeneous grouping within a desegregated school," he adds, "may have advantages if it stimulates Negro students to work harder to 'catch up' with White students in their classes and encourages White students to perform at a higher level in order to maintain any original advantages they may possess." In contrast to this competitive characteristic of heterogeneous grouping one might consider an alternative motivating force of cooperative spirit in which both Blacks and Whites in the group are encouraged to share their strengths and to assist one another in programs planned around the needs and basic strengths of each of the students. A variation of this idea is offered by Stodolsky and Lesser (1967) who suggest that "a continuous utilization of student strengths and weaknesses may well lead to diverse development beyond a minimal set of achievements." Thus, fostering of this cooperative spirit, or of multi-ethnic interaction, may well be a major curriculum objective which would be served by heterogeneous grouping.

Homogeneous Grouping

With the development of objective tests of intelligence and achievement in the early decades of this century, new tools became available for use in grouping students on various bases. Plainfield started its grouping in the high school approximately 30 years ago in the wake of the measurement movement.

Homogeneous grouping is something of a misnomer. Students vary from one another in too many ways to make the formation of homogeneous grouping a possibility. What is done is to narrow the range of difference among those in a specific class in some one or more dimensions. Levine (1968) summarizes the arguments for homogeneous grouping as follows:

1. If the range of ability in a class is very great, the teacher is faced with the dilemma of either destroying the interest of slow students by presenting material which they cannot understand or of boring and holding back the brighter students by presenting material which is too elementary and too drawn out. If the teacher aims at students in the middle range, the special needs of both the slow and the bright are likely to be neglected.

2. Because of their verbal facility and mental quickness, the brighter youngsters will provide most of the answers to questions or problems posed by the teacher or the class, thereby making it exceedingly difficult for slower students to gain the teacher's attention and for the teacher to determine whether most of the students properly understand the lesson.

3. The brighter students will do superior work and will monopolize the high grades. Even when their efforts are relatively slight, the natural advantages of the brighter students make it possible for them to achieve grades higher than hard-working but less bright pupils are able to achieve, thus leading the latter group to feel inferior and reducing its motivation to achieve.

Pros and Cons of Grouping

Unfortunately research on homogeneous versus heterogeneous grouping has not provided any clear superiority of one method over the other in respect to guaranteeing academic success. Yet, supporters of homogeneous grouping are loathe to reject homogeneous grouping on this basis. It seems so logical to many that it should be superior, and many teachers favor it. For example, The More Effective Schools Program of New York City was organized around heterogeneous grouping; however, teachers and other administrators, whose evaluation of the program was noted in New York City Board of Education's report (1965), recommended that such grouping "should be eliminated or modified." Yet in the Goldberg, Passow and Justman study (1966), it was reported that even "in predominantly middle-class elementary schools, narrowing the ability range in the classrooms on the basis of some measure of general academic aptitude will, by itself, in the absence of carefully planned adaptations of content and method, produce little positive change in the academic achievement of pupils of any ability level."

Some educators would try to have both forms of grouping. Conant, in his widely publicized report, The American High School Today (1964), gave major support to ability grouping, subject by subject, in required courses and those elected by students with a wide range of abilities. However, in respect to twelfth grade social studies, home rooms, and activities, he made the following statement:

> In the twelfth grade a course on American problems or American government should be required. This course should include as much material on economics as the students can effectively handle at this point in their development. Each class in this course should be a cross section of the school: the class should be heterogeneously grouped. Teachers should encourage all students to participate in discussions. This course should develop not only an understanding of the American form of government and of the economic basis of our free society, but also mutual respect and understanding between different types of students. Current topics should be included; free discussion of controversial issues should be encouraged. This approach is one significant way in which our schools distinguish themselves from those in totalitarian nations. This course, as well as well-organized home-rooms and certain student activities, can contribute a great deal to the development of future citizens of our democracy who will be intelligent voters, stand firm under trying national conditions, and not be beguiled by the oratory of those who appeal to special interests.

Turning to a research study, Passow (1969) reported that in E. M. Drews'' study of 432 ninth graders with each teacher teaching one homogeneous and one heterogeneously selected English class, "the homogeneous classes did not significantly alter the achievement progress of any ability group." In addition, "The homogeneous classes appeared to have little advantage for the average students as judged by teacher, peer, and self ratings... (On the other hand) superior students (in heterogeneous classes) felt a lack of challenge and stimulation."

Instead of focusing attention on the grouping per se, which may lead to interminable and futile argument, it may be more fruitful to analyze what are the underlying assumptions of those grouping techniques with respect to basic educational objectives and methods by which to achieve those objectives. Ability grouping generally finds justification in that it serves the overall goal of academic achievement. Heterogeneous grouping, on the other hand, usually serves the goal of social interaction. No one would deny the validity or importance of both these goals. The question remains as to whether the means to achieve the one goal can be mutually beneficial in achieving the other goal. Recent studies and analyses have tended to highlight one or the other of these goals.

Consequences of Grouping

Bettleheim (1958) has commented on the impoverishing effect of separating out of the average classes the more academically talented youngsters:

> Children in non-collegiate programs are marked as a lower breed. Surrounded by students who are not interested in acquiring an education, lacking companionship with students who want to learn, these children apply themselves even less than they would if there were good students in class with whom to identify. In order to achieve educationally, lower-class Whites and Negroes need to be challenged and motivated by example. Grouping (homogeneously) deprives these children of such stimulation. They are left behind as second-class citizens, educationally speaking. Denied stimulating companionship in school and given little support at home, these students find themselves in a predicament that they are poorly equipped to overcome. Dimly realizing the powerful odds against them, they soon, with few

> exceptions, succumb to hopelessness. Should children in the non-gifted group show outstanding leadership or ability, they are drawn away to join their intellectual peers in the gifted group, leaving the non-gifted group more impoverished than ever.

Many thoughtful analyses have dealt with grouping and its consequences for self-concepts, especially of the underprivileged child. For example, in an analysis of what research has taught educators, Passow (1969) observed that some educators would argue that "ability grouping is simply a means of making respectable the procedures whereby pupils from lower socioeconomic and racial or ethnic minority groups are relegated to the 'slower' and 'nonacademic' programs and provided with a basically inferior education. Observers of racially mixed schools frequently find that ability grouping is the means by which pupils are re-segregated within the school."

Such a re-segregation leads to the reinforcement of stereotypic notions against which Clark (1963) warned: "Probably the chief argument against homogeneous groupings is the fact that children so segregated lose their individuality in the education situation. . . . Homogeneous groupings tend to require that children be seen in terms of group characteristics rather than in terms of their own individual characteristics."

Legal Considerations

Thinking such as that just cited has led to a court decision against tracking[1] in the Washington, D. C. schools by Judge J. Skelly Wright in Hobson vs. Hanson (1967).

In reviewing the mass of evidence presented to the United States District Court, Judge Wright declared that "the sum result of the Washington, D. C. school system's practice of tracking, when tested by the principles of equal protection and due process, is to deprive the poor and a majority of the Negro students in the District of Columbia of their constitutional right to equal educational opportunities." (H. 7695) As for the placement of students, continues the court report, "The reason for the track system's separative effect . . . inheres largely in the placement methods used in the District, pupils being programmed on the strength of their performances in class and on standardized aptitude tests, both of which criteria are heavily -- and as it turns out, unfairly -- weighted against the disadvantaged student." The Court further questioned "whether it is possible to ascertain with at least reasonable accuracy the maximum educational potential of certain kinds of school children." It specifically endorsed the recommendation of the plaintiff that locally arrived at norms rather than national norms of a standard aptitude test be employed or that a locally standardized test be constructed in order to reflect "what the child has had the opportunity to learn and to compare his achievement with that of others who had had a comparable exposure." The Judge concluded that the defendants could not "justify the placement and retention of these children on the supposition that they could do no better, given the opportunity to do so."

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[1] Tracking, as used in Washington, D. C., involved uniform standards for homogeneous grouping throughout the school system as well as a prescribed curriculum for each of the tracks.

The Court further noted that the tracking system, especially for the lower track disadvantaged students, seriously contributed to an undermining of self-concept. Furthermore, their placement in the lower tracks was shown to be a "tragedy of misjudgments about the disadvantaged student's abilities." The Court cited the instance where 820 out of 1,272 students, who were originally placed in the Special Academic Track on the recommendations of their teachers and principals, "were discovered to have been improperly judged" when a team of clinical psychologists reevaluated the students. In this regard, the court ruling comes in line with some of the more recent objections to ability grouping, particularly in the case of disadvantaged children. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), Clark (1963) and Kvaraceus (1965) are illustrative treatments of the self-concept and self-fulfilling prophecy, as dimensions of plans for ability grouping.

The United States Circuit Court of Appeals (1969) in a review of the Wright Decision tempered somewhat its sweeping character. While upholding the decision that the tracking system should be abolished, the Circuit Court, in its opinion, included the following:

> This Court's (District Court) ruling is consistent with and non in derogation of the realistic and understandable concerns of the parents that there be adequate scope for ability groupings in the administration of the school system. The District Court made it clear that the decree permits full scope for such ability grouping. *** We conclude that this directive [District Court decision]

> does not limit the discretion of the school board with full recognition of the need to permit the school board latitude in fashioning and effectuating the remedies for the ills of the District school system. * * * The simple decree enjoining the "track system" does not interpose any realistic barrier to flexible school administration by a board genuinely committed to attainment of more quality and equality of educational opportunity.

Conclusion

Whether heterogeneous or homogeneous is used, one thing is certain, according to Levine (1968): "Schools have not been able to give them (the slow or disadvantaged students) much experience with success, to increase their motivation, to build their basic skills, to build their self-confidence and self-concept or to educate them in such a way as to provide much satisfaction for very many of their teachers." Indeed, one may have cause for interpreting the teacher's dissatisfaction with the student's progress as a function of the disparity between the high aspirations and the low achievement of the students. Such a state of frustration leaves the student with no other recourse but to react or rebel against the school which he may feel has betrayed his aspirations.

If this position of the slow or disadvantaged learner is an accurate portrayal of what occurs in many urban settings, it may be mere shadow-boxing to argue about the merits of one kind of grouping over another. As Levine (1968) says, "the advocates of universal homogeneous grouping (e. g., the track system) or completely heterogeneous grouping deflect attention from this overwhelming fact when,after pointing to the lack of success of the opposite policy in educating slow or disadvantaged students, they claim without substantial evidence that their own policy will somehow correct the situation."

The problem of quality education, which grouping one way or the other is thought to serve, may in fact have much more far-reaching and complicating strands to cope with. Hence, the need for a more comprehensive look at the objectives of the curriculum and the general organization of both staff and students in their efforts to carry out such objectives. Rather than pretend to have "the school solution," one might profit by starting, as Kvaraceus (1965) counsels, with a reexamination of the goals of the curriculum:

> The goals of the school curricula are more than ordinary goals. They are the projections of the future self-concept; they can promise a better future and a better self-concept; they can beckon the learner to run the hard course of change.

Grouping Policies and Practices

In seeking to discover the general characteristics of grouping for instruction in the Plainfield Schools, the Superintendent of Schools, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, all of the principals except one, and several guidance counsellors were interviewed. In addition, data were secured from the Director of Testing.

Requests for official policy statements revealed only the following undated statement in the Board of Education Policy files:

> The Plainfield Public Schools are organized and operated to meet the needs and develop the abilities of all students so that they may become effective and responsible citizens in our democracy.
>
> This recognition of the worth and dignity of the individual in our society is a fundamental concept that distinguishes American Public Education from all others and places on us the responsibility of doing our utmost to provide and carry to completion educational programs that reflect these basic objectives. This is not an easy task, but rather is one that represents the most challenging area of human endeavor.
>
> It requires that we share a common responsibility for the mental, social, and physical development of every student through the means of curricula and teaching methods that are designed to meet the wide range of interests and abilities in our school population.
>
> Obviously, we cannot provide completely individualized programs for every student. However, from the time the child enters kindergarten and begins his progress through the basic elementary program until he completes the departmentalized courses of study in junior and senior high school, we hope to provide an educational program

> that is designed to teach the fundamental skills to everyone, and at the same time seek out and develop the talent that lies within each individual student, whether in academic subjects or in the fields of industrial and fine arts, music or physical education.
>
> To accomplish this objective we utilize methods of grouping for reading and other skill subjects in the elementary school, and ability and achievement grouping in each subject in our junior and senior high schools, where guidance personnel, in cooperation with teachers and administrators help students to make intelligent and realistic choices.
>
> Above all, the kind of teaching that combines mastery of subject matter and a deep interest in the welfare of students on the part of every teacher and administrator assures the success of our program.

An additional policy statement on "Integration in the Public Schools," dated December 19, 1967 includes the following paragraph along with other considerstions:

> We recognize that within the Plainfield School System there are many different needs and opportunities for class and subject groupings. In order to meet these needs, there may be classes which can now be called racially imbalanced. It is our opinion that it is better to have such classes than not; that these classes should have an objective to prepare for the need for fewer such classes. We also recognize the opportunity for the display of ingenuity and innovation on the part of the staff to minimize any adverse aspects of such racially imbalanced groupings.

Information on practices, gathered from various sources, will be reported by levels of the school system.

School Organization, Kindergarten - Grade 6

Of the ten elementary schools in the district, eight had grade levels K through 4; the remaining two had grade levels 5 and 6. K-4 schools had a population ranging from Stillman's 346 to Evergreen's 667. Although few children were bussed to Stillman, Clinton, or Jefferson schools, many children were bussed to Cook, Cedarbrook, and Emerson schools, in order to create a pattern of integration which the former neighborhood school plan could not provide. Evergreen School, for example, had about 250 children bussed. Cook School had 6 busloads of children out of 550 total enrollment.

The intermediate schools (5-6 grade schools) had pupil populations of 1,600 between the two of them. In the Washington School, there were 704 children; in the Emerson School, there were 875 children. In the former school, only two buses were used, transporting mostly White children; whereas in the latter school, 460 children were bussed, comprising over one-half of the total school enrollment.

Grouping in Kindergarten - Grade 4 Schools. To the extent that it was possible, school principals of the K-4 schools, together with their staffs, have attempted to devise a heterogeneous grouping of the children in grades 1 through 4. Since no kindergarten children were bussed, heterogeneous grouping there reflected the neighborhood population from which the children were drawn. For example, Cook's kindergarten classes were all White, just as Clinton's kindergarten classes were all Black, inasmuch as each of them reflected the immediate neighborhood from which the children were drawn. Hence, the heterogeneous grouping in the kindergarten was limited by the racial composition of the neighborhood from which the children came. Other kindergarten classes were found in the two intermediate schools as well as in two other Board of Education buildings.

The procedure followed by all the elementary schools for grouping children in grades 1 to 4 for self-contained classroom instruction (except for the first-grade classes at Clinton School, where a specially financed project was being piloted)was generally as follows: during each spring the principal consulted with his teachers on each grade level. These teachers submitted to him a list of the pupils in their classes, noting whether (1) the child's reading performance had been high, average, or low; (2) the child had been a discipline problem; (3) the child was Black or White; (4) the child was a boy or a girl. A few schools had slight variations from this general pattern or may have added such categories as the I. Q. of the child or a total evaluation of the child in addition to or in place of the reading performance of the child.

After all of the teachers of one particular grade level had submitted their lists, the principal met with those teachers to form classes for the succeeding year. A conscious effort was made at these meetings to arrange heterogeneous classes which would be composed of a balanced representation of children according to sex, race, and achievement in reading. Likewise, an attempt was made to distribute equally to each of the classes for the succeeding year those children who were singled out as discipline problems. This general procedure was said to result in a substantial change of the class make-up from one year to the next.

The teachers in grades 1 through 4 worked in a self-contained classroom setting. Within the self-contained classrooms, teachers generally grouped the children for reading into high, average, and low. For mathematics, children were sometimes grouped, but this kind of grouping did not occur, as a general rule, until the fifth and sixth grades; nor was such grouping, where it did occur, as structured as the reading grouping. At the fourth grade level, some schools employed a "platoon" system for reading. The reason for such a plan was to take care of the widely divergent range of reading levels often found to have developed by the time the children had reached the fourth grade. (This range was estimated to be from 1.6 to 6.7 according to one principal.) The "platoon" system was designed to capitalize on teacher strengths or specialization by narrowing the range of the group with which she was to work and by enabling her to focus with greater intensity on a narrower range of reading skills.

Wherever homogeneous groups were organized for purposes of instruction in either reading or mathematics, special efforts appeared to be made to provide the necessary textbook and supplementary materials which could be geared to the ability and interest levels of the groups. In reading, for instance, the Scott, Foreman basal texts which were used for all students had their own three different levels: i.e., Open Highways (for slow-learners); Venture Series (for middle range) and High Horizons (for fast learners). Teachers had access to a number of supplementary tests, such as McCormack Mathers readers for boys especially; Ginn readers, Bank Street readers, and others. All schools had a library with a librarian on duty for at least a half-day; and this was often supplemented by parent librarians, as at Evergreen School.

In addition to the grouping of children into high, average, and slow reading ability levels in the first grade, some schools, like Cook, also had a co-teacher whose major responsibility was to teach five one-hour reading sessions usually to five different classes. Efforts were made in some schools to move toward individualizing the reading instruction; a natural outgrowth of this trend was the federally financed Title I project at Clinton School, involving all the first grade classes.

For children who had completed their first year in school, who are average in ability but who still are unable to function in a regular first grade classroom setting, a special class has been established in recent years. It is called, Fluid 1-2. Class size has been maintained at 15. In general, kindergarten teachers recomment students for this group and some have been tested individually. The classes are reported to have been taught generally by strong experienced teachers. A follow-up study of children in these groups was contemplated.

Grouping in Grade 5-6 Schools. In the Emerson and Washington schools, the only two fifth and sixth grade (intermediate) schools of the system, a similar procedure for heterogeneous grouping was followed, although a more systematic effort was made to group for mathematics as well as for reading. Whereas the procedure for developing the heterogeneous groups was similar to the first four primary grades in the K-4 schools, the self-contained classrooms approach of the primary grades was abandoned by the fifth and sixth grade (intermediate) schools in favor of the "cluster" plan in which three normal-size classes formed a single cluster. Each of the classes within this cluster was heterogeneously grouped in an attempt to meet the individual needs of the pupils in a classroom setting. The cluster plan has been in effect since 1964. Apparently, one of the advantages that seemed to give rise to the acceptance of the cluster plan was the possibility for some team planning within the clusters.

Scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills were obtained as a result of tests given in May for third and fourth grade children; these scores, together with the fourth grade teacher's assessment of the child, were used by the principal and assistant principal of each intermediate school, along with the other criteria for heterogeneous grouping of the primary grades. Thus, the intermediate schools followed the Board of Education policy for heterogeneous grouping of classes and provided for homogeneous grouping for reading and mathematics within the "cluster" plan.

Materials for reading reflected somewhat this homogeneous grouping, just as was the case in the primary grades. Efforts were being made in both schools for more individualized materials and for a generally individualized pattern of instruction or for a modular flexible team approach to teaching. Criticism of the present "cluster" plan seems to be tempered by the degree of freedom accorded the principals. Nevertheless, a desire for the self-contained classroom by the one school and modular scheduling by the other school seemed to be a result of the present displeasure over the ability of the "cluster" plan to achieve the instructional objectives for reading by merely homogeneous grouping.

Grouping in the Junior High Schools

There are two junior high schools in the system; Maxson Junior High School had a population of 1, 047 of whom 52. 6 per cent were Black, and Hubbard Junior High School had a population of 951 of whom 67. 7 per cent were Black.

In both junior high schools incoming seventh grade students were placed in W, X, and Y instructional groups for classes in English, social studies, mathematics and science. The process by which these groups were determined is somewhat involved, though fairly straightforward. The two major factors in setting up the groups are (1) percentile rankings of the students in language and in mathematics, and (2) the assessment of the students by their sixth grade teachers and the intermediate school principals.

Percentile grade rankings for English and social studies classes were obtained primarily from results on two standardized tests, one designed to measure ability in language and the other designed to measure achievement in vocabulary, reading, and other language arts skills such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage. The instrument designed to measure ability in language was the School and College Ability Test (SCAT) Level 4, administered to the incoming seventh graders in October of their sixth grade year. Scores on this test were converted into local percentile ranks by the District's Special Services Division under the supervision of the Director of Testing. The instrument designed to measure achievement in basic language arts skills was the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, administered to the incoming seventh graders in May of their fifth grade year. Scores obtained in three major areas -- namely, vocabulary, reading, and other language arts skills -- were then converted into local percentile ranks by the Iowa Testing Center, which returns the results to the district about three weeks after the testing. The office of the Director of Testing then computes local percentile ranks in language by averaging each student's ability percentile rank recorded from the SCAT-L test together with the average of his local achievement percentile rankings on the three different areas of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. In other words, the student's overall language percentile ranking was the average ranking he obtained on an ability test (SCAT-L) and a set of achievement tests (from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills).

Similarly, local percentile rankings of mathematics and science were obtained primarily from results on an ability test (SCAT - Level 4 - Q test in mathematics) and an achievement test (Iowa Test of Basic Skills in Arithmetic Concepts and in Arithmetic Problems). The average of these two local percentile rankings, then, became the student's local percentile rank in mathematics, which was used as the starting point for his ranking for both mathematics and science classes in the junior high school.

The local percentile class rankings in language and in mathematics were recorded on each student's "Classification Data" card prepared by the Office of the Director of Testing. In addition, the testing office prepared an alphabetical listing of the rankings in language and in mathematics for all the sixth grade students from both Emerson and Washington Intermediate Schools. Usually prepared sometime after the first of January, this "Seventh Grade Classification Data -- September, 1969" list, for example, was then made available to the principals of Hubbard and Maxson Junior High Schools for their use in further planning of classes for the incoming seventh graders. Copies of the list were reportedly sent to the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, and the principals of Emerson and Washington Intermediate Schools.

The Assistant Superintendent also received the "Classification Data" cards for each individual student. As a result of his consultation with the junior high school principals, particularly through the monthly meetings with secondary school principals conducted by the Assistant Superintendent, cut-off points were determined for the establishment of the W, X and Y groups. These cut-off points were not rigid and could be, and often were, superseded, according to one of the junior high school principals, by the assessment of performance made by the student's sixth grade teacher and the intermediate school principal.

In the past four years, the seventh grade English and social studies classes have been tentatively established according to the following local percentile rankings for language:

7W	70th to 99th percentile
7X	30th to 69th percentile
7Y	1st to 29th percentile

Similarly, for mathematics and science classes, the following local percentile rankings for mathematics were used:

7W group	80th to 99th percentile
7X group	30th to 79th percentile
7Y group	1st to 29th percentile

Each individual student's "Classification Data" card, prepared in the office of the Director of Testing was then sent to the office of the Assistant Superintendent. Using the above classifications as a guide, the office of the Assistant Superintendent then furnished the recommended group into which the student was expected to be placed (1) for English and social studies and (2) for mathematics and science.

These Classification Data cards were then sent on to the students' intermediate school. However, since the same information was provided to the two junior high principals on an IBM worksheet giving a rank order listing of students, the junior high principals preferred to use this sheet as they discussed placement of students with the intermediate school principals and the sixth grade teachers. Both junior high principals reported changing a student's tentative grouping according to the percentile rankings recorded by the office of the Director of Testing, if the sixth grade teacher or the intermediate school principal or both recommended such a change. This, then, represented the last step in the development of the group classifications for the incoming seventh grade classes.

Once the student had entered into a junior high school in September, he was assigned to classes in (1) English and social studies and (2) mathematics and science as described above. His assignment might, however, be changed as a result of periodic reviews set up by the guidance director and the principal whereby teachers are asked initially (i. e., in the second or third week of school in September) to submit to the seventh grade counselor names of students who were obviously misplaced. Then the seventh grade guidance counselor would review the recommendation of the teacher and determine whether a change was in order.

Similarly, at the end of each marking period at Maxson, teachers were asked to submit along with their grades a list of students whom they felt should be moved to a higher or a lower group and the reason for their recommendation. In addition, parents were invited to meet with teachers at the parent-teacher conference following the reporting of grades after the first marking period (usually in November) in order to discuss the performance of their children. At that time, they might discuss or request a change in their child's class group. The guidance counselor would try to recommend to the parent what he believed to be in the best interest of the child, but would yield to the parent's request for change if the parent remained so disposed after listening to the guidance counselor's advice on the matter. The principals reported, however, that very few cases arose in which parents made any such requests.

At the end of the second, third, and fourth marking periods, teachers at Maxson were asked to submit lists for any changes they felt should be made in the student's program, just as they did at the end of the first marking period.

This general procedure for review was followed in the 8th and 9th grades as well as in the 7th grade. The 8th grade counselor at Maxson Junior High School, for example, reported that at the end of the second marking period of the 1968-69 school year, as a result of teacher recommendations, 37 students were changed, 24 moving to the next higher group and 13 moving to the next lower group. A number of other recommendations received no action either because of the limitations of the schedule or the guidance counselor's judgment as to the adequacy of the reason given for moving the child. He stated that this situation was somewhat typical of what occurred in the 1967-68 school year for the same marking period, although he was not able to find exact figures to support this claim at the time of interview.

In February, the junior high school guidance counselors explained to each seventh grade group guidance class the purpose and use of the eighth grade course selection sheet. A counselor then would advise each student individually about his eighth grade program. Unless the student or a teacher indicated any strong reason to the contrary, the counselor would advise the student to take the four required courses, namely, English, social studies, mathematics, and science, in the same grouping (W, X, or Y) in which he had been at the time he filled out the course selection sheet. If a student's grouping had been changed between the time he filled out the course selection sheet and the time he entered into the eighth grade, such a change would have been recorded on the schedule he received when he returned to school in September.

Ninth grade students followed the same routine with one notable exception. Those students who elected to take an eighth grade exploratory language course (in Latin, French, or Spanish), which was heterogeneously grouped, were advised to continue in that language in the ninth grade, unless they wished to drop language study. However, since ninth grade language courses were grouped into either W or X categories, the teacher's assessment of the student's performance was the single criterion for determining into which language group the student would be placed, subject to the usual reviews by the parent and by the counselor, both of whom were expected to sign the course selection sheet, thus indicating their respective approvals. In the case of any doubts or disagreements, parents were said to be invited to meet with the counselors in order to come to a decision deemed to be in the best interest of the child by both parties.

In contrast to the homogeneous grouping for mathematics, science, English, social studies, and 9th grade language, there was heterogeneous grouping in all other courses. One of these was called the "cycles" consisting of art, music, and industrial arts or homemaking, each of which was taken for a twelve-week period with three 43-minute class sessions scheduled each week in the 7th grade. In the 8th grade, students could elect to take two half-year courses out of a list of ten offerings. In the 9th grade, students could elect to take one full-year language course (Latin, French, or Spanish) or two half-year courses out of six other course offerings.

Heterogeneous grouping was also used in physical education and in homeroom and homeroom guidance activities. The homeroom classes deserve to be singled out for special consideration because of their central position in the overall junior high school program or curriculum.

The guidance program was described as being both student-centered and teacher-centered insofar as it attempted to help establish a rapport between the student and the homeroom teacher, variously called a "mentor" or an "advisor." At Hubbard, for example, the plan was to have a homeroom teacher stay with his group from grade 7 to grade 9 in order to provide some continuity to the student throughout his career in the junior high as well as to develop rapport between the student and his homeroom teacher.

The heterogeneous grouping for these homerooms was carefully designed. A balance between Black and White and among the W, X, and Y categories was consciously sought in order to develop a pluralistic homeroom roster which would reflect as much as possible the make-up of the Plainfield community as a whole. Such a careful balancing was extended to the male-female ratio as well. Through the homeroom at Maxson Junior High, it was felt, many other activities were organized to provide a spirit of belonging to such a pluralistic group. Thus, the seating arrangement in the cafeteria, intramural activities, group guidance, and some functions of the student government and allied extra-curricular activities.

Some Consequences of Grouping Policies

Although policies relative to grouping in the junior high schools were clearly defined and implemented as already stated, certain checks were made on the consequences of these policies. In that flexibility in moving students from one grouping level to another was emphasized, data were gathered on this point at Hubbard Junior High School. First, a check was run on the number of 9th grade students (1968-69) who had been moved from one ability group to another, within one or more major subject matter areas, between grade 7 and grade 8. This tabulation, made by race, is reported in Table 1. It will be noted that 10 Black students were moved up and 11 were moved down. Five, classified as "Other" than Black, were moved up.

TABLE 1

Number of Hubbard Junior High School Ninth Grade Students (1968-69 Moved from One Ability Group to Another Within One or More Major Subject-Matter Areas[1] Between Seventh and Eighth Grades (By Race)

Moved	Black	Other	Totals
Up	10	5	15
Down	11	0	11
Totals	21	5	26

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[1] English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies.

In that there were 302 students in grade 9 at the time the tabulation was made, and in that each student had probably four chances for movement because of the number of subjects in which he was grouped, the total of 26 movements does not appear large. Viewed in another way, less than 10 per cent of the total student group had been moved. However, approximately 10 per cent of the Blacks (21 of 202) had been moved in one direction or another. No evidence is available on the number of requests which had been made for movement.

In another effort to determine the amount of movement from one ability group to another, the total population of Hubbard Junior High School during one academic year 1968-69, was studied. The findings are reported in Table 2 . It will be noted that more students were moved up than down, by over three to one. Further 44 Black students were moved in comparison with only 20 in the category, "Other." Black students constituted 67. 7 per cent of the enrollment.

TABLE 2

Number of Hubbard Junior High School Students in Grades Seven, Eight, and Nine, Moved from One Ability Group to Another Within One or More Subject-Matter Areas During 1968-69 (By Race)

Moved	Black	Other	Totals
Up	32	16	48
Down	11	3	14
Up and Down	1	1	2
Total	44	20	64

With 951 students in Hubbard Junior High School at the time the data for Table 2 were gathered, the number of movements from one group to an other is not large. Each student had approximately four or possibly five chances for movement, one in each subject area where grouping was practiced. Table 2 leads to the conclusion that groups remain quite stable.

A second kind of analysis focused on the composition of the three homogeneous groups in various major subject areas. For this purpose, the eighth grade class at Hubbard was used as a sample for intensive study. Table 2 presents the percentages of all students enrolled in the three ability groups, W, X, and Y by subject area. It will be noted that English and social science have almost the same pattern with approximately 23 per cent of the students in W groups, 44 per cent in X groups, and 32 per cent in Y groups. Also, mathematics and science have approximately 15 per cent in W groups, 55 per cent in X groups, and 29 per cent in Y groups. These similarities and differences were to be expected in view of the ways in which the groups were constituted, as was explained earlier.

TABLE 3

Percentages of Hubbard Junior High School Eighth Grade Students, 1968-69, Enrolled in W, X, and Y Ability Groups by Subject Areas

	Group		
Subject	W	X	Y
English	23.4	44.2	32.5
Social Science	23.7	44.5	31.9
Mathematics	14.9	55.2	29.9
Science	14.6	55.8	29.2

This table as well as Table 4 was based upon a total of 308 students (218 Black and 90 White). Excluded were 1 Oriental, 2 Puerto Ricans, and 1 student from India. Records were unavailable on several students. The official roster included 329 students (228 Black and 101 other) as of April 1, 1969.

Table 4 uses the same students reported in Table 3 , but gives the percentages by ability groups, subject area and race. By looking down the ability group columns, the differences between Black and White percentages become obvious. For example, an examination of the Group W column reveals that as few as 2.8 per cent of the Black students are in W science groups. As many as 10.6 per cent of the Black students are in social science W groups. Substantially higher percentages of White as compared to Black students are enrolled in the W groups in all subjects. In the X groups the percentages are more comparable, but in all subject areas a higher percentage of the Black students than of the Whites are enrolled. In the X groups there are substantially higher percentages of the Black than of the White students enrolled.

TABLE 4

Percentages of the Hubbard Junior High School Black and White Eighth Grade Students, 1968-69, Enrolled in W, X, and Y Ability Groups by Subject Area

Subject	Race	Group W	Group X	Group Y	Total
English	B	8.7	48.2	43.1	100.0
	W	58.9	34.4	6.7	100.0
Social Science	B	10.6	46.8	42.7	100.1
	W	55.6	38.9	5.6	100.1
Mathematics	B	3.7	56.9	39.4	100.0
	W	42.2	51.1	6.7	100.0
Science	B	2.8	58.8	50.0	100.1
	W	43.3	50.0	6.7	100.0

B - Black
W -White

Table 5 presents still another comparison. As indicated above. Table 4 reported the percentage of the Black and of the White students in the eighth grade at Hubbard who were enrolled in each ability group by subject areas. Thus, in English for example, the W groups as a whole consisted of 26.4 per cent Black students and 73.6 per cent White students. In the English X groups the students were 77.2 per cent Black and 22.8 per cent White. In the English Y groups the students were 94.0 Black and 6.0 White. The general relationships are quite similar in social science.

TABLE 5

Percentage Composition of W, X, and Y Ability Groups, Hubbard Junior High School, Eighth Grade, 1968-69(By Race)

Subject	W B	W W	X B	X W	Y B	Y W
English	26.4	73.6	77.2	22.8	94.0	6.0
Social Science	31.5	68.5	74.4	25.6	94.9	5.1
Mathematics	17.4	82.6	72.9	27.1	93.5	6.5
Science	13.3	86.7	73.8	26.2	93.3	6.7

B - Black
W - White

However, in mathematics and science the percentage composition of the W groups is much lower for Black students (17.4 and 13.3 per cent respectively). In reading Table 5 it should be recalled that the total group represented 218 Black and 90 White students. (See footnote to Table 3)

During May 1969, both junior high schools were requested to provide information, by subject areas, on the number of sections in each ability group, the average class size, the range of class sizes, and the percentage of White students in each class. An analysis of this data revealed several facts which are supportive of the findings already presented as well as certain new items not previously mentioned. These will be reported briefly.

At Hubbard Junior High School the number of sections of various ability level groups varied somewhat from subject to subject on each grade level. This probably reflected some minor differences among departments in grouping policies. There did not appear to be any tendency to vary class size, on the average, with the ability level. Average class sizes for all ability levels ranged from 21 to 31, with 25 representing the median of the averages. The percentage of White students was invariably related to level. For example, the highest percentage of White students, 96 per cent, was reported for 9 W mathematics groups. The lowest percentage of White students in W groups, 67 per cent, occurred in 8 W social studies. Similarly, in Y groups the highest percentage of White students, 11, occurred in 7 Y mathematics; the lowest percentage of White students in Y groups, 5, was in 8 Y English. In view of the fact that the school was reported to be 32.3 per cent "Other," most of whom were White, there was an obvious tendency for Whites to be served by the upper groups in greater proportion than the Black students.

The figures for Maxson Junior High School presented a similar picture with some few exceptions. Maxson had many Y classes which were smaller than the X or W classes. However, there was some tendency for W classes to be smaller than X classes. The median of the average class sizes was 26 in contrast to the median of 25 at Hubbard. The range in class sizes, 18-32, was a little greater than at Hubbard. The percentage of White students in classes was related to the level; however, the percentages of White students in Y classes was consistently higher than at Hubbard. While there were only 13 per cent White students reported in 8 Y English, many Y level groups averaged 20 per cent or over, with 36 per cent White students reported to be in 9 Y English classes. However, Maxson had close to 50 per cent White students in the total enrollment.

In the section which follows, similar data will be presented for the Senior High School and a comparison drawn with the two junior high schools.

Grouping in the Plainfield High School

Origins of Ability Grouping in Plainfield. In November, 1934, the Plainfield Board of Education accepted "the invitation of the Educational Records Bureau to participate as one of the seven schools in the Public School Demonstration Project (in Traxler, 1939). This project according to Ben H. Wood, then Director of the Educational Records Bureau, developed as a result of:

> the already widely accepted view that the traditional academic curriculum is too narrow to care for the educational needs of all the pupils now in the secondary schools. The effort to maintain the traditional pattern and standards of curriculum that is still dominated by the college preparation idea is one of the major obstructions to the inauguration of an effective guidance program in many schools. Hence the need for a program of educating the mass of teachers in the philosophy and methodology of individualized education. The concern and loyalty of teachers must be transferred from "the curriculum" and from mass "standards" to the welfare of the individual pupil in the world in which he must live. It has become increasingly clear to those associated in this project that neither curricula nor standards are easily defensible except in terms of their appropriateness to the abilities, interests, and needs of the pupil as individuals. In order to make the school experience more appropriate to the individual pupil, we must learn more about the pupil than we have in the past (in Traxler, 1939).

To know more about the individual pupil, stress was placed on cumulation records, a systematic testing program, use of anecdotal records, and other factors aimed at focusing more attention by both teachers and counselors on the role of guidance in serving the individual needs of the pupils.

One of the sources of this guidance movement of the 1930's spearheaded by this project

> has been identified with the measurement movement in education, but which, when it is analyzed, is seen to involve a concept much broader than that of educational measurement alone. Basically, it is the simple, and yet fundamental thesis that the first duty of the school is to know its pupils as individuals. It involves, first, a recognition of the essential dignity and worth of the individual and, second, a willingness to study him by every means which the resources of the school can command . . . . Objective tests are

> the most important instrument yet discovered for the collection of data for the cumulative record, but they are by no means the only instrument (Traxler, 1939).

This basic concern for knowing the individual needs was one of the guiding ideas agreed upon by the Plainfield High School teaching staff, according to Dr. Galen Jones who was principal at that time:

> Common observation has taught us much concerning individual differences and in recent years there has been a growing body of scientific data resulting from the psychology of adolescence. We believe that it is time that the secondary school cease its lip service to the fact of individual differences and attempt an earnest application of what is known (in Traxler, 1939).

This brief specific description may be helpful in understanding the educational ideological origin of ability grouping as it was developed in Plainfield High School. The present system is an outgrowth of this thinking, even though refinements or modifications have been introduced from time to time.

Evaluation of Grouping Practices. A section of the 1966-67 Evaluation by the State Department of Education opened with the following statement:

> Ability grouping is an attempt to adapt curricular offerings to individual differences in academic ability. Grouping reduces the range of ability to manageable dimensions and permits appropriate adaption of content and approach.

After describing in favorable terms the grouping procedure, which was primarily in the Senior High School, the report ended with this paragraph:

> Whether this school should have fewer ability groups, whether the divisions should be at different points, and whether percentile ranks (or possibly standard scores) should be the foundation of the divisions into ability groups -- these are questions which keep coming up and which are still unanswered.

Current Grouping Practices. Incoming tenth grade students were placed in W, X1, X2, and Y instructional groups for classes in (1) English, (2) social studies as an elective, (3) mathematics, (4) science, and (5) foreign language. In general the groups were constituted as follows: the W group consisted of students who were considered to be in the top quarter of their grade level for the particular subject; the X1 group, those in the second quarter; the X2 group, those in the third quarter; and the Y group, those in the fourth quarter.

In the past, students were grouped in these sections based on two main factors: (1) standardized test scores and (2) teacher assessment of the individual student's performance in the given subject. However, since the 1966-67 evaluation of grouping conducted as part of the State of New Jersey evaluation of the senior high school, greater emphasis has been placed on the individual classroom teacher's assessment of the student's performance in the given subject than on the standardized test scores.

A fairly well-established procedure was found to be followed in an effort to arrive at a placement of the student into an ability group which was deemed appropriate to his needs and ability. The rationale for grouping has been spelled out for all students and parents to examine in the student's Curriculum Book, a copy of which is given to every incoming tenth grader in the spring semester of his ninth grade year:

> Pupils differ greatly in their ability to do school work. Some are good in one subject area and weak in another; some are able to do well in any school course; and some do poorly in most of their classes. One way to take care of these individual differences is to divide pupils into "ability groups" and to modify the courses appropriately, so that all pupils are challenged but few (if any) are frustrated by work which is much too difficult for them. This is the method which Plainfield High School has developed over a period of about thirty years, with improvements and refinements from time to time.

Along with a copy of this Curriculum Book, ninth grade students were said to be given a tentative course selection sheet, distributed by the junior high school ninth grade guidance counselors who also then attempted to brief students in January or February on the general procedures for course selection when they met with their group guidance classes. In addition, the guidance counselor tried to consult with each ninth grade student on his current status and on his future plans in order to help the student plan his program. The guidance counselor also obtained the student's course grades for the first and second marking periods in ninth grade.

Ninth grade teachers of English, science, and foreign languages received from the senior high school department chairman of English, science, and foreign language, a "Department

Sectioning Card" for each student. The teacher entered the grades for each of the marking periods as well as the current course section or group (W, X, or Y) in which the student was enrolled. Finally, the teacher recommended the group in which the student should be placed in the tenth grade.

A senior high school guidance counselor set up an interview with the ninth grade student and invited his parents to participate. This interview use to take place at the senior high school from 1960-68, but was changed for the spring semester of 1969 to take place at the respective junior high schools. At the time of the interview, the senior high guidance counselor would review the course sectioning cards filled out by English, science, and foreign language teachers. Based on the student's grades and test scores, such as the more recently taken tests (the SCAT -- Level 3, Iowa Tests of Basic Skills taken in the eighth grade, and the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Test (Gamma Test) taken in the ninth grade, the guidance counselor gave his recommendation as to the group placement of the student. If the guidance counselor's recommendation differed from that of the teacher, the matter would be discussed further with the department chairman, who received the "Department Sectioning Cards" after the counselor had resolved the placement of the student. If the counselor's recommendation agreed with that of the teacher and if the student and the parent were satisfied with the placement of the student and his program for the tenth grade, then the guidance counselor filled out the "Student Planning Form" which was used for the purpose of scheduling the student for the tenth grade. At the same time, the student received a copy of his program, which he was expected to take home to his parents, in the event that they had been unable to come to the conference with the senior-high guidance counselor. The student was expected to sign this form, indicating that his course selection had been finished.

Even though course selection was considered final after the individual conference with the ninth grade student and his parents, provisions were made for some degree of flexibility or course changes, particularly in the opening months of the fall term. This provision was spelled out in the Curriculum Book:

> Ability groups are not meant to be static. It is possible to move downward in the case of necessity, or to move upward if performance and attitude warrant. Changes (usually made at the end of a year for the year following) must be supported by good reasons. A change downward requires demonstration that the work is really too difficult; a change upward requires good performance of the current level, improvement in scores in one or more standardized tests, and evidence of good attitudes and motivation. Consult with your teacher and your counselor if you are interested in changing the level of your school subjects.

Because sequencing is deemed crucial in determining what mathematics course would be taken, the senior high school guidance counselor generally placed a student into one of six different mathematics courses, depending on the mathematics he had already had in the junior high school. The guidance counselor also took into consideration the general guidelines worked out by the senior high school mathematics department, since no "Department Sectioning Card" was filled out by ninth grade mathematics teachers. The following guidelines were presented "for the benefit of the counselor" in both junior and senior high school in advising his students regarding mathematics courses in the tenth grade:

> A pupil who passes any course in mathematics Grade 9 is not required to take additional mathematics in the senior high school. Those pupils who wish to elect additional courses in this subject area may do so, in keeping with their ability and achievement in mathematics.
>
> In general, pupils will remain in the same ability groups in which they have been placed in the junior high school. Refinement in classification will be made by the head of the department in the senior high school, probably at the end of the school year, when Cooperative Test scores are available.
>
> Pupils in the W track who receive low grades and/or low Cooperative Test scores in Algebra 2 may expect to be reclassified into the X track which, it should be noted, is fully college preparatory and equal in quality to the mathematics courses in most high schools. Such reclassified pupils will not be penalized when they go into Mathematics 11X, for which they will receive full credit. It will be possible for a pupil who began in the W track in junior high school and was reclassified to the X track in the senior high school to receive credit for four "college units" (or twenty high-school points) in college preparatory mathematics, the sequence being Algebra 2 in ninth grade, then Math 10X, Math 11X, and Math 12X in Grades 10, 11, 12.

Sequences in Mathematics

Grade 9	Grade 10
Algebra 2	Math 10W or 10X
El. Algebra	Math 10X or Int. Math X
Math 9X	El. Algebra or Gen. Math 4
Math 9Y	Gen. Math 2

Where students elected to take either World Geography or World History, guidance counselors were usually guided by the recommendations made by the ninth grade English teachers, since no "Department Sectioning Cards" were used in social studies. These two classes were open to X and Y students. At the W level there was a course in modern history, also an elective.

The Business Education Department offered seven different courses, most of which were designed for pupils who intended to enter business upon graduation. Only two of these courses, however, were suggested as being available to Y students, who were generally discouraged from taking such courses as consumer economics, bookkeeping I, stenography I, and typewriting I, because of a reliance on reading or verbal ability. Also, "seriousness of purpose and a sincere effort to meet business standards," according to the Selection of Subjects for Grade 10 sheet "will be assumed."

Except for fundamentals of art I, history and appreciation of art, and mechanical drawing elective, which discourage Y level students from attendance, the other five courses in the industrial, home, and fine arts departments were open to all students. Other electives were offered in language arts and in music. In the former area, speech 10 and drama, and journalism were offered, mainly to W and X students. "Y pupils, if highly motivated, may also elect speech 10. Permission of the department head is required." Likewise such permission was required for drama and journalism. Music, band, boys chorus, and girls chorus were open to all students. However, fundamentals of music (theory) required students "of some musical background," e. g., band, chorus experience, and history of music required the students to have "considerable musical experience."

Almost all of the electives in Grade 10 except the courses in industrial arts, homemaking, and some business courses systematically excluded the Y students on the basis of either scholastic aptitude, reading ability, or lack of experience. A Black or Afro-American history course which was not included on the sheet "Selection of Subjects for Grade 10" may prove to be an exception if it is open to all tenth grade students.

Since the high school is committed to some degree of flexibility in regards to the ability grouping in different classes, changes did occur in the program of a number of students, although exact figures over a period of time were not obtained. Students were reported to be encouraged to discuss possible changes with their guidance counselors. Particularly at the beginning of the year there were a number of changes, some of which were due to computer or other mechanical errors.

No systematic review of the student's placement was reported to be made except in February when he was to make out his course selection for the following year. However, students were encouraged to consult with a department head if they wished to change their grouping. The English department chairman, for example, estimated that changes were made for roughly 50 students who had come to him to discuss courses.

Scheduling of students for eleventh and twelfth grade classes followed a similar line to that for the incoming tenth graders. The main criteria seemed to be the student's performance in the given classes as assessed by the teachers who were expected to fill out "Sectioning" sheets for all those students whom they felt should move up or down for English, mathematics, social studies, science or foreign languages. These sectioning sheets were collected by the respective department chairmen who then turned over the information to the guidance counselors. At the same time, teachers were expected to record on each student's "Department Sectioning Card" the grades obtained in the first two marking periods of the on-going academic year together with the teacher's recommendation for placement in the succeeding year's course. This "Department Sectioning Card" remained in the department office.

Social studies teachers did not fill out such sectioning sheets; instead, a student's placement in social studies was determined largely by his placement in English, unless the social studies teacher specially recommended a move from the student's placement. The mathematics department prepared for the guidance counselors its own list of "what changes are advisable," according to the guidance director.

In a bulletin to teachers, one department chairman stated that teachers should "Be sure to inform students who are being changed to a higher or a lower section!" He also noted that "Probably most of your pupils will remain in their present ability sections."

Where a student's placement preference differed from the teacher's recommendation, it was reported by some guidance counselors and department chairmen, the student would be "given the benefit of the doubt." At the end of the placement interview with the student, the guidance counselor filled out the "Student Planning Form," used for the purpose of scheduling the student in the succeeding academic year. At the same time, the student received a copy of his program, which he was expected to take home to his parents. He was also expected to sign the duplicate copy, thus signifying his awareness of the expectation "to take this form home, show it to my parents, and discuss my selection of subjects with them." Since the student was considered "to have had an opportunity, before this date, to obtain information and advice and to think about which subjects should be included in his schedule, action taken after consultation with his counselor was considered final, upon his signing. However, provision was made for changes, if a note or letter from the parent or guardian was delivered to the Guidance Office within ten days after the signing. As for changes of the student's program during the succeeding academic years (in the 11th or 12th grades), the pattern was the same as that described for grade 10.

Some Consequences of the Plainfield High School Grouping Policies. As with the analysis of the grouping practices in the two junior high schools, an attempt was made to gather data on some of the operating consequences of the Plainfield High School, or what has also been referred to as the Senior High School, grouping policies. Before presenting these, it may be useful to present basic enrollment data for the Plainfield High School. As indicated in Appendix 1, the high school had 1,620 students as of April 1, 1969. Of these, 46.4 per cent were Black. However, while the Black students were about equal in number to the classification, other students, 298 to 303 in grade 10, the proportion of Black students was lower in grade 11. In grade 12, there were only 197 Black students compared to 293 classified as, other.

Movement of students from one grouping level to another was examined to check the flexibility, in practice, of the grouping policies as already explained. Table 6 summarizes the findings for the 1968-69 year. The table is to be read as follows: In grade 10, of the students moved "Up" or to a higher ability group in "One Subject" (first and second columns), there were five Black students and eleven others. Those moved "Up" in "More than one subject" (third and fourth columns) consisted of one Black student. The total moved "Up" was 17 as shown in the last column on the right.

Several statements about the data of Table 6 can be made by examining the totals for each of the grades which appear in the total column at the right. Comparing the numbers moved up and the numbers moved down in each grade suggest that except for grade 10 where almost twice as many were moved down as up (31 to 17), the movement was about equal in the two directions. Further, the total number moved was 69 in grade 10, 66 in grade 11, and 50 in grade 12. This represents about 11 per cent of those in grade 10, almost 13 per cent of those in grade 11, and slightly over 10 per cent of those in grade 12. An examination of the horizontally reported totals, which appear at the bottom of the display for each grade, reveals that the great preponderance of these changes were in one subject only. Thus, while the percentages of students involved in shifts in level was as stated, most of these shifts were experienced by these students in only one of the several subjects they may have been taking at a particular time. Thus, it would appear that the amount of movement is very slight relative to the total potential movement. However, insofar as placements are initially correct, and students do not change in their motivation or capacity, movement up or down is not to be expected.

Table 7 shifts attention to the number of classes at each ability level, by subjects and the average class size. The table is read as follows: In English, grade 10, W level, there were 112 students in five classes, for an average class size of 22 students. An examination of the left hand column reveals that in English and history particularly, there has been substantial subdividing beyond the W, X, and Y levels which have been mentioned. Special or superior groups have been created, such as English 11 Sp and United States History 11 Sp. This might be regarded as a subdivision of the W level. In several instances the X level has been subdivided into X_1 and X_2 and in a few instances the lower level of the Y's have been placed in a separate group. Actually there are six levels of groupings rather than three in some subjects and grades.

An examination of the average class size column in Table 7 reveals that the top or W Sp groups as well as the bottom or lowest Y groups tend to be smaller than most other classes, and enroll 15 to 20 students. While there are other individual small classes, there does not appear to be consistent class size differences relating to the W, X_1, X_2, or Y levels where class size averages range from 19 to 27 in English and history, where most grouping takes place. A little additional light is shed on the class size situation by Tables 8 and 9 which will be presented later.

In an effort to determine the racial composition of classes at each ability level, information was requested late in May of 1969. Teachers provided a head count as to the Black and White students in each section. While the data were not absolutely complete because of teacher absences and other reasons, the general situation is clearly revealed. Tables 8 and 9 indicate the findings for English and United States history respectively.

In Table 8 it will be noted that in English 10W there were five classes, averaging 22 in enrollment, and ranging from 20 to 32 students per class. In these classes the enrollment was 83 per cent White students. Probably it would be more correct

Table 6

Number of Plainfield High School Students by Grade and by Race, Moved from One Ability Group to Another within a Given Subject Matter Area During 1968-69 Academic Year(1)

Movement	One Subject		More than One Subject		Total
	Black	Other	Black	Other	
(Grade 10)					
Up	5	11	1		17
Down	9	21	1		31
Up and Down			4	2	6
Change within Ability Group(2)	7	8			15
Total	21	40	6	2	69
(Grade 11)					
Up	7	13	3	3	26
Down	11	13	2	2	28
Up and Down		1		4	5
Change within Ability Group(2)	4	3			7
Total	22	30	5	9	66
(Grade 12)					
Up	7	14			21
Down	8	9		1	18
Up and Down				2	2
Change within Ability Group(2)	7	1	1		9
Total	22	24	1	3	50

(1) The changes on the above table reflect only those changes made in the five major subject areas: English, mathematics, social studies, science, and foreign language. The movement of students from regular social studies courses to the Afro-American history course, which began in October, 1968, were not recorded. Students dropped from a given course were not considered as changes in ability group.

(2) For the most part, these changes were for mathematics, where a student might change from intermediate math to elementary algebra, both of which were considered to be courses in the X_1 ability group, according to the "Relative Standing Chart."

Table 7

Number of Students, Number of Classes and the Average Class Size within Each Subject-Grouping Category in the Plainfield High School (September 20, 1968)

	Number of Students	Number of Classes	Average Class Size
English 10 W	112	5	22
10 X_1	169	7	24
10 X_2	175	7	25
10 Y	140	6	23
English 11 Sp	16	1	16
11 W	89	4	22
11 X_1	152	6	25
11 X_2	169	7	24
11 Y	77	3	26
11 Ys	20	1	20
English 12 Sp	15	1	15
12 W	90	4	23
12 X_1	144	6	24
12 X_2	150	6	25
12 Y	52	3	17
11 X Exp.	20	1	20
12 Y Exp.	19	1	19
12 Y Con.	19	1	19
USH 11 Sp	17	1	17
11 W	81	4	20
11 X_1	165	7	24
11 X_2	189	7	27
11 Y	112	5	22
11 Ys	18	1	18
12 Sp.	17	1	17
12 W	90	4	23
12 X_1	136	7	19
12 X_2	174	8	22
12 Y	87	4	22
World History X	51	2	26
Y	71	3	24
Afro-American History	108	5	21
World Geography X			
Y			
Modern History	28	2	14
Social Living	83	3	28
Economics	31	2	16

	Number of Students	Number of Classes	Average Class Size
Biology W	101	5	20
X	227	10	23
Biological Science	218	5	44
Chemistry W	55	3	18
X	114	5	23
X_2	55	2	28
Chemical Science	36	1	36
Physics W	36	2	18
X_1	33	2	17
X_2	21	1	21
Physical Science	32	1	32
Earth Space Science	48	2	24
Human Biology	20	1	20
Math 10 W	55	2	28
10 X	274	9	31
11 Sp	15	1	15
11 W	39	2	20
11 X	148	6	25
12 Sp			
12 W	29	2	15
12 X	59	2	30
General Math 2	146	5	29
3	104	4	26
4	87	4	22
Elementary Algebra	186	6	31
Intermediate Math	89	4	22
French 1W	5	1	5
$1X_1$	27	1	27
$1X_2$	31	1	31
2W	53	3	18
$2X_1$	68	3	23
$2X_2$	35	2	18
3W	30	2	15
3X	36	2	18
4	18	1	18

	Number of Students	Number of Classes	Average Class Size
German 1 W	15	1	15
1 X	23	1	23
2 W	20	2	10
2 X	21	1	21
3	14	1	14
Latin 1	11	1	11
2 W	19	1	19
2 X	16	1	16
3 & 4	14	1	14
Spanish 1 W	9	1	9
1 X_1	41	2	21
1 X_2	100	4	25
Spanish 2 W	27	2	14
2 X_1	82	4	21
2 X_2	87	4	22
3 W	21	1	21
3 X	45	2	23
4	12	1	12
Americanization	4	1	4
Introduction Business	59	2	30
Type 1	67	2	34
1S	125	4	31
2	17	1	17
2S	64	4	16
Bookkeeping 1	39	2	20
2	14	1	14
Record Keeping	49	2	25
Steno 1	40	1	40
2	9	1	9
Data	35	2	18
C.O.P.	8	1	8
Mdse-Law	21	1	21
Type-Note	25	1	25
T.P.U.	21	1	21
D.E.	44	2	22
Notehand	55	2	28

	Number of Students	Number of Classes	Average Class Size
Exp. I.A.	100	5	20
Auto 2/3	16	1	16
Machine 2/3	14	1	14
Construction	12	1	12
Furniture	12	1	12
Plumbing	11	1	11
Fund Machine	7	1	7
Fund Auto	15	1	15
Mech. Drawing	99	4	25
Metal Elect.	29	2	15
Wood Elect.	33	2	17
Occupations	47	2	24
Ind. Occ. (C.I.E.)	29	1	29
Home Ec. 1	54	3	18
2, 3	22	2	11
Elect.	27	2	14
Fundamental Art I	91	3	30
II	17	1	17
Fine/Applied Art	19	1	19
History Art	7	1	7
Modern Living	51	3	17
Band	30	3	10
Phys. Ed. 10 B	336	3	112
10 G	351	3	117
11 B	344	3	115
11 G	335	3	112
12 B	319	3	106
12 G	294	3	98

to indicate this as 83 per cent other than Black. No instructions were given to teachers on the classification of students as to Black or White. Some created other sub-categories, others did not. In reading both Tables 8 and 9 , it should be noted that there may be some discrepancies as to bases for classifying students Black or White.

An examination of the average class size, and the class range as shown in Table 8 , in comparison to related data in Table 7 will reveal some discrepancies. Presumably these are primarily due to the fact that Table 7 is based on September data, and Tables 8 and 9 on May data. The lower level groups and the upper level groups are slightly smaller in English.

The extreme right hand column in Table 8 is the most important one. If it is examined grade by grade it will be noted that in each grade there is a substantial shift in the percentage of White students from high to low sections. Thus, for example, there are 83 per cent Whites in the English 10W classes, and only 11 per cent in the English 10Y classes. Similar tendencies occur in the other grades. It should be recognized, however, that the total percentage of White students in the school increased from grade 10 to grade 11, and from grade 11 to grade 12, as shown in Appendix 1. Thus, were there a complete random distribution of students to classes, one might expect to find 50 per cent White students in grade 10 classes, 53 per cent White students in grade 11 classes, and almost 60 per cent White students in grade 12 classes. Keeping these differences in mind, it will be noted that the actual percentages of Whites (interpreting Whites as other than Black students), vary substantially from what a random distribution would produce. There is a clear shift from 83 to 90 per cent Whites in the W groups for the three years to 11 to 27 per cent White students in the Y groups for the three years. Further, differences between X_1 and X_2 groups for each of the three years substantiate the same tendency.

Table 9 presents data identical to that in Table 8 for United States History. Inspection reveals that the general picture is much the same for United States History as for English. The percentage of White students decreases substantially as one moves from Special or W groups to Y groups.

Data on the racial composition for other subject areas grouped homogeneously were examined. The general findings presented in Tables 8 and 9 and confirmed in these areas, although some subjects are influenced additionally by the elective nature of the course.

Table 8

Number of Classes, Average and Range of Class Size, and Percent of White Students by Grade and Level in English, May 1969.

Level	Number of Classes	Average Class Size	Range Class Size	Percent White
10 W	5	22	20-32	83
10 X_1	7	23	13-30	62
10 X_2	7	23	11-31	39
10 Y	6	19	12-26	11
11 Sp	1	15	15	100
11 W	4	20	13-25	89
11 X_1	6	24	13-31	74
11 X_2		23	17-27	40
11 Y	5	22	18-26	11
12 Sp	1	15	15	100
12 W	4	22	19-25	90
12 X_1		24	18-29	75
12 X_2		25	20-30	47
12 Y	5	15	9-20	27

Table 9

Number of Classes, Average and Range
of Class Size, and Percent of White
Students by Grade and Level in
United States History, May 1969.

Level	Number of Classes	Average Class Size	Range Class Size	Percent White
11 Sp	1	17	--	100
11 W	4	19	15-22	88
11 X1	6	21	9-27	76
11 X2	5	23	18-27	50
11 Y	4	20	16-26	18
12 Sp	1	17	--	100
12 W	2	20	17-23	92
12 X1	7	20	9-25	72
12 X2	6	24	14-32	46
12 Y	2	22	17-26	21

The findings, then, relative to the racial composition of the homogeneous groups are similar at both the junior and the senior high school levels. However, the grouping process has been refined and extended at the senior high school level in respect to the number of levels provided. Further, the segregation by race is considerably more severe at the senior high school as contrasted with the junior high school level.

Summary

A review of the literature relative to grouping reported considerable diversity of opinion. Substantial recent professional, as well as legal, opinion raises serious questions as to the desirability of the impact of homogeneous grouping on students who may be classified as poor achievers. Plainfield has homogeneous grouping at both the junior and senior high school levels, where it serves to segregate students by race. The extent of the differentiation and the extent of the segregation are substantially more severe at the senior high than at the junior high school level.

APPENDIX I

Enrollment by School and Race, Plainfield, New Jersey (April 1, 1969)

	Black	Other	Total
Plainfield High School			
Grade 10	298	303	601
11	246	272	518
12	197	293	490
Special Education	10	1	11
	751	869	1,620
Hubbard Junior High School			
Grade 7	214	106	320
8	228	101	329
9	202	100	302
	644	307	951
Maxson Junior High School			
Grade 7	205	140	345
8	170	173	343
9	144	203	347
Special Education	7	5	12
	526	521	1,047
Barlow	205	148	353
Bryant			
K	38	5	43
Special Education	74	16	90
Cedarbrook	317	335	652
Clinton	390	33	423
Cook	288	262	550
Emerson (K, 5-6)	565	310	875
Evergreen	353	314	667

	Black	Other	Total
Jefferson	321	135	456
Stillman	280	66	346
Washington (K, 5-6)	529	175	704
Woodland	267	141	408
Lincoln (Special Education)	69	21	90
Total District	5,617	3,658	9,275

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE CLASS OF 1968

To obtain a picture of the flow of a single cohort (group of students who were ever members of a particular school class) through the Plainfield schools, the class of 1968 was selected. School records showed that, beginning with students who were seventh graders in 1962-1963, 795 students were at one time or another members of the class. Records were relatively complete, but some types of data were missing, chiefly on students who were in the school system and the class of 1968 for only a short time (e. g., a student who entered and left the class and school system in the same year). Errors of recording by the study team were also possible, but an attempt was made to keep them at a minimum by having teams of two extract data from student records.

Table 10 shows the total group as it was affected by transfers in and out of the class, as well as the class "output" in terms of graduates and dropouts.

Annual reports of the senior high school were used to devise Table 11, which is similar to Table 10, for the classes of 1962 through 1968 for the three year period in which they were in Senior High School only. When a three-year period is examined, as in this case, the gross number of potential graduates is smaller than in a six-year study, since students moving in and out of the class in junior high school do not become part of the data. Net potential graduates, however, differ only if numbers of students have dropped out of school before grade 10. The only comparable figures are for the class of 1968. Since net potential graduates, graduates, and dropouts are almost identical for the class of 1968 in Tables 10 and 11, it is clear that there were no dropouts (or at least no significant number of dropouts) before grade 10. The very slight differences in numbers are most readily interpreted as error.

Tables 10 and 11, taken together suggest that the approximate dropout rate for student groups moving through the Plainfield schools approaches 25%. The dropout rate for students who enter the system in kindergarten and remain in the system until they either "quit school" or graduate is probably lower, but is not known. (Stability of residence is generally associated with perseverance in school.) However, a school system is regarded as "responsible" for all students who enter it at whatever grade level and do not leave to enter another

TABLE 10

STUDENT INPUT AND OUTPUT: CLASS OF 1968
(6 - YEAR PERIOD -- GRADES 7-12)

Initial enrollment grade 7, 1962-1963		564
Transferred in		231
Gross potential graduates		795
Transferred from group:		
To private school	13	
Moved from Plainfield	129	
Still in school	12	
Disposition unknown[1]	22	
Institutionalized	7	183
Net potential graduates		612
Graduates[2]	467 (76%)	
Dropouts[2]	145 (24%)	612

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[1] These were students on whom records were very sketchy. None were graduates; they are assumed to have left the system rather than to have dropped out of school. This assumption may slightly underestimate dropout rate.

[2] These figures vary slightly from figures provided by the High School Guidance Department (see Table 2) but the percentages are almost identical.

TABLE 11

STUDENT INPUT AND OUTPUT: CLASSES OF 1962-1968
(THREE-YEAR PERIOD -- GRADES 10-12)

Year	Initial Enrollment	Transferred in	Transferred Out	Net Potential Graduates	Graduates	Dropouts	Per Cent Graduates	Per Cent Dropouts
1962	474	137	95	516	435	81	82%	18%
1963	477	44	62	459	386	73	84%	16%
1964	566	39	63	542	480	62	89%	11%
1965	658	26	66	618	533	85	86%	14%
1966	638	90	113	615	520	95	85%	14%
1967	644	31	103	572	475	97	83%	17%
1968	615	86	88	613	469	144	77%	23%

school system (the "net potential graduates" figure in Tables 10 and 11 is the number of students in those classes for whom the school system was "responsible.")

Plainfield's dropout rate is approximately equal to or perhaps slightly lower than the national average, currently estimated at between 25 and 30%. Only very recently, dropout rates in several of the nation's largest cities were estimated to be 50%. A school system can hardly take comfort from comparisons of this kind, given the limited opportunities available to dropouts today. But these norms do suggest that it is not novel to have as many as one in four students leaving school before graduation.

Table 11 shows interesting changes in the dropout rate over the last few years. Almost nine of ten students in the class of 1964 completed school, but the school completion percentage (ordinarily called "holding power") has been decreasing since that time to its present level of just above three of four students.

Racial Differences

A principal purpose of the study of the class of 1968 was to compare the school experience of Blacks and Whites in the class. Racial identification was made through pictures on student records. If complete, a record contained two pictures of the student, one taken in junior high school and one in senior high school. Of the 795 students ever in the class, 103 had not provided pictures and therefore could not be classified as to race. Eight students were identified as belonging to other races. Of the remaining students, 253 were identified as Black and 431 as White.

Before these two groups are contrasted on a number of variables, the impact of the omission of the racially unclassified group on the data warrants brief discussion. Obviously, summed statistics for Blacks and Whites do not equal statistics for the total group. The separate statistics for Blacks and Whites are each more "favorable" (suggestive of a better educational experience) than those for the racially unidentified group. About two-thirds of this last group were not in the Plainfield Schools as seventh graders and an unusually high proportion transferred out of the system; the dropout rate for this racially unidentified group was nearly 60 percent! In short, the group artificially formed from an absence of pictures in their student records appears to have had a singularly unfruitful school experience. Such a group might warrant an intensive study not possible from the data available in student records. For the purposes of this study, it is important only to recognize that findings from both Blacks and Whites are more optimistic to an unknown degree than they would be if it had been possible to include all students in the racial comparisons.

High School Completion

Table 12 presents student input-output data separately for Blacks and Whites. The first column of the table shows the data for the total group, which were previously given in Table 10; as mentioned previously, sums of subgroup statistics do not equal totals because of the racially unidentified group.

The size of the cohort of potential White graduates did not change over the six-year period: 97 new students joined the group and 97 left. The cohort of potential Black graduates increased somewhat, not because a higher proportion joined the group than in the case of Whites, but because a smaller proportion left the system.

The graduation rate for Whites was noticeably higher (84 per cent) then that of Blacks (75 per cent); but the latter rate is about the same as that for the total class. There is no rationale for pro-rating the racially unidentified group among the two groups. If the group were treated as entirely White, the graduation rate for Whites would be reduced to 77 per cent; if treated as entirely Black, the graduation rate for Blacks would be 68 per cent. These two rates are, in effect, lower limits on the holding power for the two groups.

Students' Families

Three items of data were recorded about the families of students: the presence or absence of mother and father; father's education; and father's occupation. These data are presented in Tables 13,14 and 15.

Table 13 shows that White students were more often from families in which both mother and father were present, but the proportion for Black students (78 per cent) is appreciably

TABLE 12

STUDENT INPUT AND OUTPUT: CLASS OF 1968, BY RACE (6 - YEAR PERIOD -- GRADES 7-12)

	Total	Black	White
Initial enrollment, 7th grade	564	192	334
Transferred in	231	61	97
Gross potential graduates	795	253	431
Transferred out:			
Private schools	13	---	10
Moved	129	21	69
Still in school	12	8	4
Institutionaled	7	4	1
Disposition unknown	22	5	13
Total transferred out	183	38	97
Net potential graduates	612	215	334
Graduates	467 (76%)	161 (75%)	279 (84%)
Dropouts	145 (24%)	54 (25%)	55 (16%)

higher than that reported in a number of studies. Differences in father's education and occupation are rather dramatic, as evidenced in Tables 14 and 15. If the assumption is made that those fathers for whom educational and occupational data were not available tended to have less education and fewer jobs at higher levels than those for whom data were available, differences would be increased. There is clearly a significant socio-economic difference between the families of the Black and White students.

Measured Scholastic Ability and Achievement

Several sets of tests scores were taken from student records and used to form Table 16. A single lengthy table was chosen over a series of separate, and possibly more detailed, tables because of the similarity of findings from table to table and the need to see the data as a whole. The shifts in the manner of presenting the data are partly due to the nature of the test, partly the result of an attempt to simplify the presentation. Data for the two Otis Gamma tests and the College Entrance Examination Board tests (SAT-Verbal and SAT-Math) are given for three quartile points derived from each group's scores. For most of the remaining tests, the proportions of each group obtaining scores in quarters derived from the "national" percentiles are given.[1]

The data do not lend themselves to inter-test comparisons. Though there is improvement in scores over time, both groups improve, and improvement is probably mainly due to loss from the cohort of students who leave school before graduation. The most significant finding is the similarity of the data from test to test and grade to grade. White students in the group are strikingly superior to Black students on these measures of scholastic ability: roughly two-thirds of White students tended to be above "national" medians, while two-thirds of Black students were below them.

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[1] Highest quarter = "national" 75th percentile and above; second quarter = between "national" 50th and 74th percentile; third quarter = between "national 26th and 49th percentile; lowest quarter = "national" 25th percentile and lower.

TABLE 13

FAMILY COMPOSITION BY RACIAL GROUP
NUMBER AND (PER CENT)

Lives with	Black	White	Total
Father & Mother	197 (78%)	392 (91%)	644 (81%)
Mother only	23 (9%)	14 (3%)	50 (6%)
Father only	12 (5%)	8 (2%)	27 (3%)
Other	16 (6%)	9 (2%)	41 (5%)
No information	5 (2%)	8 (2%)	33 (4%)

TABLE 14

FATHER'S EDUCATION BY RACIAL GROUP
NUMBER AND (PER CENT)

	Black	White	Total
Elementary only	42 (17%)	52 (12%)	106 (13%)
Some high school	41 (16%)	44 (10%)	86 (11%)
High school graduate only	73 (29%)	141 (33%)	228 (29%)
More than a high school education	18 (7%)	135 (31%)	159 (20%)
No information	79 (31%)	59 (14%)	216 (27%)

TABLE 15

FATHER'S OCCUPATION BY RACIAL GROUP NUMBER AND (PER CENT)

	Black	White	Total
Professional	8 (3%)	71 (16%)	82 (10%)
Other White collar	15 (6%)	124 (29%)	146 (18%)
Skilled labor	67 (26%)	126 (29%)	208 (26%)
Unskilled & Semi-skilled	98 (39%)	55 (13%)	161 (20%)
Unemployed	5 (2%)	2 (0. 5%)	7 (1%)
No information	60 (24%)	53 (12%)	191 (24%)

TABLE 16

TEST DATA BY GRADE AND RACE

Grade and Test	Black	White
Seventh Grade		
Language: Percent of group in Quarters[1] (National Percentiles)		
Highest	7	33
Second	17	32
Third	33	24
Lowest	43	11
Mathematics: Percent of group in Quarters[1] (National Percentiles)		
Highest	5	36
Second	16	31
Third	30	22
Lowest	49	11
Otis Gamma IQ (Within group Quartiles)		
Q_3[2]	101	115
Md	93	106
Q_1	87	98
Eighth Grade		
Iowa Reading: Percent at or above grade level	38	73
Iowa Arithmetic: Percent at or above grade level	40	71
Ninth Grade		
Language: Percent of group in Quarters[1] (National Percentiles)		
Highest	9	35
Second	21	33
Third	29	24
Lowest	40	9
Mathematics: Percent of group in Quarters[1] (National Percentiles)		
Highest	8	39
Second	22	27
Third	33	23
Lowest	38	11
Tenth Grade		
Otis Gamma IQ:		
Q_3	106	120
Md	97	111
Q_1	90	102
Reading: Percent of group in Quarters (National Percentiles)		
Highest	16	47
Second	15	21
Third	29	18
Lowest	40	14
Twelfth Grade		
SAT - Verbal (Standard Score)		
Q_3[3]	443	569
Md	393	473
Q_1	322	383
SAT - MATHEMATICS (Standard Score)		
Q_3	447	598
Md	404	496
Q_1	344	419

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[1] Language & Mathematics - % in quarters derived from National Norms.

[2] Quartile represents three points on a scale to separate the four quarters.

[3] Means 1/4 of total placed above 448 or 569.

Ability Group Classification

Before the data on ability group classification by race are presented, the data on the class of 1968 are used to examine two questions: (1) To what degree were these students, taken individually, in classes at more than one ability level as against classes all at the same ability level? (2) What was the likelihood of students changing ability group levels as they moved over grades 7 through 12?

The first question deals with the degree to which assignments to ability grouped classes resulted in de facto "tracking." Table 17 shows the numbers of the class of 1968 who were in each of five ability group classifications in grades 7, 10, and 12. The small number of students in "Special" and "W" classes were not regarded as being in groups of mixed level. More important, students who were in some "X_1" and "X_2" classes in high school were not regarded as being in groups of mixed level; this adjustment, which was the product of difficulty in recording, results in an underestimate of "mix." In Table 17, then, students in classes of mixed ability level are those who are in some "W" and some "X" classes and students in some "X" and some "Y" classes (rows 2 and 4).

Table17 shows a considerable amount of mix in grade 7 classes; about 24 per cent of the cohort were in classes of "mixed" ability level. As defined here, the amount of mix is reduced to seven per cent at grade 10 and four per cent at grade 12. In grade 12, only six students who were in any "Y" classes were in any classes but "Y" classes. Thus, Table17 shows convincingly that in Senior High School, students of the class of 1968 in upper level classes (W and Sp) and those in lower level classes (Y classes) approximated being "tracked." There may, of course, have been considerably more "mix" in "X_1" and "X_2" class assignments.

Whether assignments to classes of varying ability group level were "mixed" or not, what was the likelihood that a student's classification might change as he moved from grade 7 to grade 12? The question is difficult to answer because of the change in ability level classifications from Junior to Senior High School and because of the large number of subjects taken as a student moves from grade 7 to 12. To simplify the tabular presentation, the relatively small numbers in mixed "W" and "X" or mixed "X" and "Y" groups were lumped with the "W" and "Sp" groups and the "Y" groups, respectively. Since the "X_1" and "X_2" "Mixes" were not recorded, the result of these adjustments is to place students in three gross groupings (as previously shown in Table 17, this oversimplifies

TABLE 17

ABILITY GROUP CLASSIFICATION
NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN SINGLE AND MIXED ABILITY GROUP CLASSIFICATIONS, GRADES 7, 10, and 12

	Grade 7	Grade 10	Grade 12
Sp, Sp & W, W	103	83	73
W & X	66	29	13
X, X_1, X_2	194	334	311
X & Y	76	11	6
Y	163	130	96
Total	602	587	499

grouping arrangements in grade 7, but does little violence to those of grade 10 or 12.)

Table 18 using the groupings described above, shows first the tenth grade assignments of students in each of three ability groupings in grade seven; the lower segment of the table shows twelfth grade assignments for those in each of the three ability groupings in grade 10. The numbers are limited by the necessity that a student have been in both grades (7 and 10 or 10 and 12) to become a statistic in the table.

If one eliminates the "totals" column and row in each segment of Table 18 the numbers on the diagonal running from top left to bottom right are those whose classification did not change between the grade levels shown. Numbers below the two diagonals moved up in classification; numbers above the diagonals moved down in classification. From grade 7 to grade 10, 70 per cent of the class of 1968 remained in the same classification, 18 per cent moved up, and 12 per cent moved down in classification. Changes from grade 7 to grade 10 are partly artifactual because of the shift from three to four ability group classifications between these levels; almost all the shifting is down from "W" or up from "Y" into an "X" classification. From grade 10 to grade 12, 87 per cent of the class of 1968 remained in the same classification, four per cent moved up, and nine per cent moved down in classification.

In summary, Tables 17 and 18 show that there was, for the class of 1968, relatively little assignment of students to classes of differing ability levels after junior high school and relatively little shift over time in students' assignments to groupings except for that accounted for by the change in number of classifications from junior to senior high school.

Table 19 shows ability group classifications separately for Black and White students at grades 7, 10, and 12; the same three gross classifications utilized in Table 18 are employed in Table 19. The table shows clearly that Black students were far more often than White students in the lowest classifications and conversely, White students were far more often than Black students in the highest classification. The "X" groups absorbed larger numbers of both groups as they moved from junior to senior high school.

To obtain some sense of the racial composition of the classes attended by Black and White students as they moved from grades 7 to 12, Table 20 was constructed. It is not the product of a census of students in individual classes. Rather, at each grade level, the students who were in each grouping arrangement and for

TABLE 18

ABILITY GROUP CLASSIFICATION
CHANGE IN CLASSIFICATION FROM GRADES 7 TO 10 AND 10 TO 12

	10th Grade			
	Sp, Sp & W, W, W & X	X X_1, X_2	X&Y, Y	Total
7th Grade				
Sp, Sp & W, W, W&X	87	51	---	138
X, X_1, X_2	7	155	7	169
X & Y, Y	--	81	101	182
Total	94	287	108	489

	12th Grade			
10th Grade				
Sp, Sp & W, W, W & X	82	29	---	111
X, X_1, X_2	6	240	13	259
X & Y, Y	--	11	80	91
Total	88	280	93	461

TABLE 19

ABILITY GROUP CLASSIFICATION - GRADES 7, 10, AND 12, BY RACE

		Sp, Sp & W, W, W&X		X, X_1, X_2		X & Y, Y	
	N	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Grade 7							
Black	212	16	8	53	25	143	67
White	358	147	41	131	37	80	22
Grade 10							
Black	207	9	4	102	49	96	46
White	348	103	30	216	62	29	8
Grade 12							
Black	174	6	3	102	59	66	38
White	296	79	27	187	62	30	10

TABLE 20

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ABILITY GROUPS[1] - GRADES 7, 10 AND 12

	Grade 7		Grade 10		Grade 12	
	%B	%W	%B	%W	%B	%W
Sp only	--	--	--	---	10[2]	90[2]
Sp & W	--	--	--	100[2]	--	100[2]
W only	10	90	7	93	6	94
W & X	10	90	10	90	15[2]	85[2]
X, X_1, X_2 alone or in combination	29	71	32	68	35	65
X & Y	51	49	82[2]	18[2]	40[2]	60[2]
Y only	70	30	76	24	70	30
Total for grade	37	73	37	73	36	74

---

[1] Table should be read as follows: Of those students in the class of 1968 for whom racial identification was possible, who were members of the class in the seventh grade, and who were in W sections in all classes which were sectioned, 10 per cent were Black and 90 per cent White, etc.

[2] N - Less than 12.

whom racial identification was possible were regarded as a group and the proportion of White and Black students in each such group was ascertained. The data, then, are roughly representative of the typical class racial composition encountered by the class of 1968.

It is immediately clear that, if the groups for whom numbers were very small (see footnote 2 of Table 20) are disregarded, there was very little change in racial composition of ability level groupings from grade to grade. Over the three grades taken as a whole, that is, over the school life of this class, one out of every 10 students in a "high" group was Black; three out of every 10 students in a "middle" group was Black; five of every 10 students in mixed "X" and "Y" classes were Black (but the numbers in such groups were very few in senior high school); and seven of 10 students in "Y" groups only were Black students. There is little question that students with upper and lower ability group assignments were in essentially segregated classes.

Attendance

Whether school attendance is an indicator of the effectiveness of schooling or whether it is rooted in other causes and is simply a necessary precondition for the effective education of youth is a moot point. It is undoubtedly some of both; in any case, attendance records are of more than passing interest.

Table 21 shows the proportions of the two racial groups for whom 25 or more days of absence was recorded in each of the three years when the class was in grade 7, 10, and 12. Twenty-five days is an arbitrary point which represents about one day's absence in seven, an absence rate assumed to be high. Two findings are of interest: (1) the proportion of students in both groups having this or a higher absence rate rises markedly for both groups from grades 7 to 12; (2) the proportion of Black students having this or a higher absence rate are consistently higher than the proportions of White students. The fact that three out of ten Black students were absent 25 or more days in the twelfth grade strikes the study team as one of the most remarkable statistics uncovered in the study of the class of 1968.

Academic Achievement

End-of-year grades in the seventh, tenth, and twelfth years were recorded for each student in the cohort at those grade levels by

TABLE 21

PER CENT OF STUDENTS ABSENT 25 DAYS OR MORE, BY GRADE AND RACE

Grade	Black	White
7	6	4
10	13	7
12	30	11

determining modal grades in major subjects, i. e., the grade most often obtained. A more refined average, such as grade point average, would have increased clerical work many times over, and for the purposes of the study, had little advantage over the cruder measure.

Table 22 shows modal grades at each of the three grades separately for Black and White students. The most remarkable finding for the study team was the sizable proportions of both groups of students with modal grades in the D-F range at all grade levels. The numbers with D-F modal grades in grade 10 are so large (35 per cent of the cohort, regardless of race) as to suggest that some sort of "academic crackdown" must have been operative in the first year of senior high school.

Grades for Black students are consistently lower than those for White students. The discrepancy is slightly greater in grades 7 and 12 than in grade 10, the year of reckoning. But that year saw almost half of the Black students achieve modal grades in the D-F range!

Differences Among Ability Groupings

Standardized Test Scores and Race

The data extracted from school records on the Class of 1968 permitted an analysis which is related to the process of allocating students to ability groupings, though not identical to it. We were able to take, one at a time, several standardized measures of scholastic ability and achievement and show the relationship of these measures to ability group designations for Black and White students separately. For example, we could categorize Black and White students in IQ ranges and examine the proportions of the two groups in each of the IQ categories assigned to the three gross ability level groupings first explained in connection with Table 18 and used also in Table 19.

A table constructed from such data examines three things at once: score on a standardized test of ability or achievement; assignment to ability group; and race. Since scores on several standardized tests were available, and since it was possible in each case to examine ability group assignment at three points (grades 7, 10, and 12), the number of possible analyses -- and consequently tables -- is very large. Because the trend of the data in all analyses was similar, we elected to present only three tables. Tables 23 and 24 examine,

TABLE 22

MODAL ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT[1]
GRADES 7, 10, AND 12, BY RACE

		A		B		C		D-F	
	N	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Grade 7									
Black	213	8	4	49	23	96	45	60	28
White	357	22	6	132	37	145	41	58	16
Grade 10									
Black	208	1	0.5	29	14	81	39	97	47
White	346	9	3	75	22	163	47	99	29
Grade 12									
Black	175	--	0.0	27	15	90	51	58	33
White	296	8	3	104	35	131	44	53	18

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[1] Modal academic achievement is the end-of-year grade most often obtained in major subjects; in case of ties (e.g., two B's and two C's), the higher grade was chosen.

TABLE 23

SEVENTH GRADE OTIS GAMMA IQ AND SEVENTH GRADE GROUPING ASSIGNMENT BY RACE

(Per Cent of IQ Category Assigned to Ability Level Grouping)

	89 And Under		90-99		100-109		110-119		120 And Over	
	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W
SP, Sp & W, W, W & X	--	--	--	5%	12%	27%	64%	64%	100%	96%
X, X_1, X_2	3%	18%	27%	43%	48%	63%	36%	31%	--	4%
X & Y, Y	97%	82%	73%	48%	40%	10%	--	5%	--	--
	N=58	N=28	N=66	N=58	N=52	N=101	N=11	N=80	N=3	N=48

TABLE 24

EIGHTH GRADE IOWA READING GRADE PLACEMENT AND SEVENTH GRADE GROUPING ASSIGNMENT BY RACE

(Per Cent of Reading Level Category Assigned to Ability Level Grouping)

	6.9 and Below		7.0 - 7.9		8.0 - 8.9		9.0 and Over	
	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W
Sp, Sp & W, W, W & X	--	--	--	--	8%	4%	48%	76%
X, X_1, X_2	6%	17%	17%	48%	50%	80%	32%	22%
X & Y, Y	94%	83%	83%	52%	42%	16%	20%	2%
	N=49	N=23	N=75	N=71	N=53	N=97	N=25	N=155

TABLE 25

TENTH GRADE OTIS GAMMA IQ AND TENTH GRADE GROUPING ASSIGNMENT BY RACE

(Per Cent of IQ Category Assigned to Ability Level Grouping)

	89 and Under		90-99		100-109		110-119		120 and Over	
	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W
SP, Sp & W, W, W & X	=	=	=	=	5%	4%	16%	26%	40%	78%
X, X_1, X_2	7%	27%	48%	76%	73%	92%	80%	74%	60%	22%
X & Y, Y	93%	73%	52%	24%	22%	4%	4%	--	--	--
	N=44	N=15	N=64	N=50	N=55	N=84	N=26	N=92	N=5	N=95

for Black and White students separately, seventh grade ability grouping assignments against seventh grade Otis Gamma IQ and eighth grade Iowa Reading Grade placement, respectively. Table 25 is a similar table utilizing tenth grade Otis Gamma IQ's and tenth grade ability grouping assignments.

The three tables presented may be regarded as containing 16 comparisons (5 in each of Tables 23 and 25, and 4 in Table 24). Fourteen of the sixteen comparisons clearly show White Students achieving superior ability group designations. The last two comparisons in Table 23 slightly favor Black Students, but are most reasonably regarded as "ties." The findings suggest that, given the same scores on any one test of academic ability or achievement, the placement of White students in ability groupings is consistently at a higher level than that of Black students. The use of multiple criteria of assignment (more than one standardized test; grades; motivation; teacher recommendation; student wishes, etc.) apparently operates to lower the level of assignment of Black students to ability groupings below that of White students and below the level which would have resulted if any one of these standardized tests had been used as the sole criterion.

Academic Achievement

Earlier in this chapter (Table 22), academic achievement as represented by modal end-of-year grades was shown for Black and White students separately, regardless of ability group designation. The explanation for the choice of "modal" grades, rather than, for example, grade print average, was given in connection with that discussion.

Table 26 shows modal academic achievement by ability group designation at grades 7, 10, and 12 for the class of 1968. At all three points in the life of the class of 1968, the higher the ability group designation, the higher the modal grades. The pattern is most pronounced in grade 10 where the typical modal grade for the highest groups was B, for the middle groups C, and for the lowest groups D.

The observed differences in assignment of grades might not seem surprising, were it not for the rather elaborate table of grade equivalencies according to course ability group designation used in the high school for computing class ranks. The table makes it clear that the lower the course ability group designation, the less a given grade is worth in computing class rank. Such a plan

TABLE 26

MODAL ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT[1] BY ABILITY GROUPINGS GRADES 7, 10, AND 12

(Percent of Ability Group Designation Obtaining Modal Grade)

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Grade 7						
W, W & X	10	49	34	6	.5	.5
X	4	26	49	18	.5	1.0
X & Y, Y	2	23	41	27	.5	6.0
Grade 10						
Sp, Sp & W, W, W & X	9	47	35	7	2	--
X, X_1, X_2	--	13	52	27	1	6
X & Y, Y	--	6	30	50	4	9
Grade 12						
Sp, Sp & W W, W & X	9	58	31	1	--	--
X, X_1, X_2	--	24	51	21	1	1
X & Y, Y	--	10	47	29	5	9

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[1] Modal academic achievement is the end-of-year grade most often obtained in major subjects; in case of ties (e.g., two B's and two C's), the higher grade was chosen.

makes it possible for students to elect higher ability level courses for which they are eligible without fear of lowering their class rank, which is important to them in seeking college admission; it also should free teachers in classes of lower ability group designation to use the full range of available grades to indicate achievement even when content is less demanding than in higher level sections of the same course. Despite this protective device, grades assigned in lower ability level courses are obviously lower. Three explanations seem possible:(1) students in lower ability level courses do not achieve as well as those in higher ability level courses even with less difficult content; (2) the content of courses of varying ability levels is not properly adjusted; or (3) despite the freedom not to do so, teachers persist in comparing students in any level with those at all levels in assigning grades. It seems probable that all three possibilities are operative in some degree. Whatever the case, it seems obvious that a study of grading practices is strongly indicated.

Summary and Discussion

A study of those students who were ever members of the class which graduated in June 1968 from Plainfield High School was undertaken in order to arrive at a picture of the school experience of that group. School records were utilized for the data; and the school year, 1962-1963, when the class was in the seventh grade, was chosen as the starting point. Some 795 students were at one time or other members of the class.

The findings were detailed in earlier sections of this chapter; they are highlighted here:

1. The dropout rate is not markedly high when viewed against national averages, but neither is it markedly low. Moreover, it is increasing. It is higher for Black than White students, though the discrepancy is not especially large.

2. The data on school attendance and grades earned both suggest a less than happy educational experience for many students. The data for Black students on modal grades in their first year of senior high school, and attendance in their last, strongly suggest that substantial numbers of Black students are not only unhappy in school but alienated from it.

3. The ability grouping plan, though not a "tracking" plan, tended to approximate tracking in the higher and lower groups, especially in senior high school.

4. There was relatively little change in ability group membership for students as they moved from grade 7 through grade 12, except for that necessitated by the change in number of levels from junior to senior high school.

5. A kind of within-school segregation is approximated in the highest and lowest ability group levels; high ability level classes were largely White and low ability classes were largely Black.

6. The position of Black students in ability groupings is generally lower than that of White students with equal measured academic ability or equal scores on a standardized achievement test. The use of multiple criteria in making recommendations for group assignments apparently operates to lower the assignments of Black students in relation to White students.

7. Grades earned by students at differing ability levels suggest that, for whatever reasons, the opportunity to achieve grades at the higher levels, and the positive reinforcement presumed to flow from such grades, is either less for students in lower ability level classes, or less utilized by them.

The existing plan for ability grouping consists of courses offered at different levels of difficulty (and sometimes content); rough proportions of students to be allocated to courses at the different levels; criteria for judging appropriate placement of students; and a professional educational advisory service (the guidance departments) for the allocation of students to classes. That it results in good education for some students is undoubtedly true. But analysis of the class of 1968 suggests that it results, for substantial numbers of Black and White students, in a largely segregated school experience, and for many students, particularly Black students, in an unrewarding and unhappy school experience. If the plan is defined as including these several elements, then it is a bad plan and/or was poorly executed because it worked badly for so many students of the class of 1968. Within the general outlines of the plan, there is undoubtedly room for improvement; but the experience of the class of 1968 suggests strongly that whatever new plan is developed, a plan of execution that is equitable for all students is essential.

CHAPTER III

PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

The Plainfield Schools do not have a separate division of pupil personnel services. Staff personnel ordinarily represented in such a division are employed in the schools, however. The study team for pupil personnel services concentrated on the guidance departments of the senior high school and the two junior high schools; in these schools, interviews were held with guidance personnel and with groups of students. In addition, an interview was held with the department head for special services. The opinions of the study team are impressionistic: they derive from the evidence collected in individual and group interviews, but they cannot be documented objectively.

Organization and Functions of Special Services

In addition to the department head, the department has two social workers, two learning disability specialists, four psychologists, only one full-time in special services (they are regarded as the equivalent of two-and-one-half psychologists), and two psychiatrists for two hours per week each. Their two major concerns are (1) assignment of pupils to special classes (neurologically impaired, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, etc.) under the provisions of the Beadleston Acts; and (2) the identification of serious individual adjustment problems of pupils and referral to appropriate outside agencies.

Decisions about pupils are made by study teams assigned to individual pupil cases. The basic study team consists of a psychologist, a social worker, a learning disability specialist, and a psychiatrist; the team may be extended by the addition of other relevant specialists, including community agency workers. Decisions are made in weekly case conferences, chaired by the department head. In minor cases of pupil adjustment not involving special class placement, one or more special service staff members may work with the pupil case. The department annually reviews the needs for and proposes new types or additional sections of special education classes; it is obviously in the best position to assess pupil needs for such classes.

The department is hard pressed to perform the important but limited services expected of it. The department head for special services reports that very little preventive work is done; consultation with teachers takes place but tends to center about the collection of information in connection with a pupil case. To propose and develop programs for teaching human relations in the schools, for example, would overtax existing staff resources and appears to lie outside expectations held for them.

The Guidance Departments

The two junior high schools and the senior high school each have a guidance department; there are no elementary school counselors. There is no system-wide director of guidance, but the departmental chairman in the senior high school sometimes convenes meetings of all counselors for special purposes. The organization and functions of the three departments are described separately.

Organization and Functions

Maxson Junior High School has four counselors, including the department head and one full-time secretary. Since there are between 1,000 and 1,100 students in the school, the counselor-pupil ratio is comfortably under the 1.300 ratio commonly recommended, but achieved only in better staffed schools in the wealthiest states. The principal functions are (1) holding individual conferences with students and/or their parents about academic and vocational planning and school adjustment; (2) conducting group guidance classes; and (3) performing a variety of associated quasi-administrative and clerical tasks.

One is immediately struck by the amount of time devoted to group guidance classes. All students in the school have one class per week in group guidance, with class size averaging in the low 20's. Three counselors have 13 or 14 sections each of group guidance; the department head has eight such sections. An extensive outline developed by a former counselor at the school is available, as is an assortment of texts. It appears, however, that the counselors have chosen to pay relatively little attention to the outline or texts, and to focus on group discussions of topics that are close to student needs. There are, of course, planned sessions on such topics as orientation, planning one's courses in junior high school, study habits, and planning for high school. Though counselors saw advantages in the group guidance classes, they did not appear to hold them in high regard. Students, too, expressed little enthusiam for them, though they saw some sessions of these classes as useful.

For individual counseling, one counselor is assigned to each of the three grades with the expectation that they will continue for three years with their groups, rather then remain with a single grade level. The assignments to group guidance classes, however, correspond imperfectly with the assignments to individual counseling because of scheduling difficulties.

Hubbard Junior High School has three counselors, including a department chairman. The counselor-pupil ratio approximates the nationally recommended ratio. Until very recently, their principal functions were identical with those of Maxson, at least in their general form. However, group guidance classes conducted by counselors have now been discontinued. The reasons given centered about the lack of availability of counselors for help with individual students during the substantial portions of their time which was spent with groups. In addition, the group sessions were apparently not highly valued by either the counselors or the administrative staff. Some of the content of the group guidance classes is to be incorporated into the social studies classes, but there appears to be no well-developed plan for such incorporation.

Assignments for individual counseling is by grades, but the opportunity to select one's own counselor regardless of assignment was encouraged, and a good deal of "crossing over" was reported.

Plainfield Senior High School has eight counselors including the chairman and the placement counselor, who offers a specialized service and is located in a separate office, but who is conceived of as part of the guidance staff. Their principal function is individual counseling about educational and vocational planning with secondary attention to personal counseling. Counselors do not hold group guidance classes, but meet from time to time with large groups of youngsters or parents for special purposes. As in many high schools, college "advisement" and its associated tasks occupy a considerable portion of the counselors' time. Counselors at times work with small groups of students (perhaps 2 to 4) in discussing common problems.

Students are assigned to counselors by alphabet and sex. The alphabetical division equalizes counselor load and permits the student to have the same counselor during his high school years; the rationale for assignment of students to like-sexed counselors probably is intended to make students more comfortable in discussing personal problems. In addition to working with assigned counselors on a drop-in or appointment basis, the high school counselors spend several weeks in the spring in conferences with ninth graders, who will enter the high school the following September. Ordinarily, these conferences are held at the high school where they can be coupled with a brief orientation to the school; this year, because of tensions in the high school, the conferences were held at the junior high schools.

The suite of offices for the guidance department falls abysmally short of reasonable standards. Privacy for discussion is not possible except in the chairman's office; and a lack of space has forced the use of the hall for students waiting to see counselors and prevented the development of an adequate information center for student use. These conditions, which are a genuine deterrent to an effective guidance service, will be remedied, however, on occupancy of the new school.

Specific Issues Related to Guidance Services in the Plainfield Schools

While there are differences among the three guidance departments in staff, organization, and functions, several significant issues affect in some degree the programs in all three schools. Hence, these issues are discussed here rather than in the sections in which the separate programs were briefly described.

Guidance and Ability Grouping

As indicated in an earlier section of the report, most subject fields provide courses or sections of courses for differing ability groups. Since "assignment" to ability groups is by subject field, not "across the board," the plan should not be confused with "tracking." In a school which has "tracks," students are at the same ability group level for all subjects so arranged.[1] Plainfield High School has, in addition, a "single curriculum," that is, an arrangement under which each student's program is planned individually. There is, for example, no "academic" program, "general" program, or "commercial" program, under which a student follows a fairly well outlined sequence of courses. As pointed out in the Plainfield High School "Curriculum Book," 1969 edition, programs for students with similar goals tend to be similar, but more variation is likely than under a multiple-curriculum plan.

The student's program is worked out in consultation with the school counselor. The school counselor is, then, the agent of the school who is present when course decisions, including ability group designations, are made. In short, the guidance staff is closely associated with ability grouping, and criticisms of it.

What is the relationship of the guidance staff to the plan? First, it is clear that it is not a plan which the guidance departments either devised or promoted. Their opinions[2] of the plan vary:

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[1] The degree to which the plan results in student assignments which resemble those of a tracking plan is discussed in a separate section of the report.

[2] This brief section does not do justice to the variety of opinions offered by counselors, or to the suggestions they offered for modifying the plan.

most counselors see some ill effects of the plan; some believe it should be radically changed. Most, however, are conscious of differential learning abilities among students and are not prepared to scrap the plan in the absence of an alternative plan. It seems fair to say the guidance departments have supported the plan without presenting major objections or counterproposals to it, despite some dissatisfactions with it.

Are counselors merely the persons designated to report the school's decisions about ability grouping to the student and his parents or do they have an important role in formulating the school's recommendation? The answer is somewhat mixed. At the point at which the school's initial recommendation about ability grouping is made (toward the end of grade 6 for grade 7 in the junior high schools), the counselors' role appears to be minimal. In subsequent determinations (changes in ability group assignments; regrouping into four rather than three groups for senior high school) the counselors have a more central role: they utilize teacher recommendations, past performance, and standardized test scores to form the professional opinion that is, in effect, the school's recommendation.

As best the study team could ascertain, counselor recommendations have tended to be regarded as professional judgments and contested actively in only small numbers of instances. The student or parent who seeks a change in recommended ability group assignment would, in general, be confronted by the counselor's contrary recommendation and, in the absence of new or different evidence about the student's ability, would have to press his case vigorously to effect a change. This is to say that the students are, in effect, "assigned" to ability groups; in the main, they or their parents do not freely choose them. (Some persons interviewed said that it was their impression that, in the last year or two, students' and parents' choices have had greater influence on the decision.)

It seems reasonable for a school to devise an educational plan to suit instruction to individual ability, and, through its counselors, to furnish a professional opinion on the appropriate match between the student and the instructional level of courses. But do the counselors "administer" this plan fairly? Despite perceptions of some students that White students were favored over Black students in ability group designation, the study team uncovered no evidence of discrimination on the part of counselors in making recommendations. The data on the Class of 1968, reported in another chapter, do suggest, however, that the combination of criteria used in connection with ability group designation operates to place Black students at lower ability group levels in relation to White students than if a single criterion of academic ability or achievement as measured by a standardized test were used.

Counseling Services

In Plainfield High School, individual counseling is emphasized as the central function of the counselors. Group guidance has been a more prominent function in the junior high schools, but, as noted earlier, group guidance classes have been discontinued in one junior high school (Hubbard) to free more time for individual counseling.

Guidance department descriptions suggest that educational and (to a lesser degree) vocational planning is intended to be the focus of most individual counseling; but counseling about personal problems is also given its place. Interviews with counselors suggest that educational counseling is indeed the major focus of their interviews. Discussions with students suggest that, for the most part, they do not regard the guidance offices, as places to bring personal problems. This perception of school counselors by students is a common one. Though disconcerting to anyone in the field, it is logical for most students not to view an office where interviews are necessarily short and where invited interviews deal with educational planning as a place to which to bring problems they define as "personal."

This is not to say that educational counseling may not lead to discussion of personal problems or that no students come to regard a counselor as a resource for clarifying "personal" matters; but personal counseling is apparently neither an important expectation nor an important function of the school guidance staffs.

Within this counseling orientation, do students from lower ability groups get "equal treatment"? The answer to this question must be speculative. The probability is that they get as much service per pupil, but that the service, much more often than in the case of higher ability level students, is rendered in time of difficulty, in particular, academic difficulty. Students planning on education beyond high school undoubtedly receive more service in the eleventh and twelfth grades than other students; but this imbalance is partly restored by the placement counselor, who works most often with students not planning further education.

Perhaps the crucial question is whether lower ability group students are enabled to solve their educational problems through counseling equally with those in higher ability groups. When the question is put this way, lower ability group students are clearly more poorly served. But if this is an indictment of the Plainfield counseling staff, it is equally an indictment of counseling staffs throughout the country: counselors are simply far more skilled at helping students whose course of development is generally successful than students whose academic careers are not marked by success.

The question of whether middle-class White counselors can develop a good working relationship with lower socio-economic class Black students arises naturally in Plainfield. Since there are several Black counselors, one can ask about their effectiveness, particularly with Black students. It appears that, at least given the present level of tension in school and community, Black students have a more immediate sense that Black counselors are "with them." Our conversations with Black counselors support the students' view: the Black counselors appear deeply committed to improving the lot of Black students. White counselors are not indifferent to the problems of disadvantaged Black students, but they do not exhibit the same sense of commitment to a cause as the Black counselors. This is in no sense to conclude that counselors can work effectively only with students of like race. There were several reports of favorable regard for White counselors by Black students; but it was rather clear that the sense of trust implied in such a statement is not easily won at this moment in the history of the Plainfield schools.

The Conception of Guidance in the Schools

One question in the mind of the study team was whether the guidance departments of the three schools had actively promoted special programs or program emphases in connection with community tensions as reflected in the schools, especially the deteriorating relations between Black and White students. If a guidance department is viewed as having special concern for student growth and development and special competence in understanding and enhancing that development, then one might expect it to have special responsibility for attending to the mounting inter-group tensions in the schools.

As noted earlier, the three guidance departments, as departments, appear to be strongly oriented to the decisions and problems faced by individual students, and to prize individual counseling most highly. Work in group guidance, where it exists, is regarded as supplementing individual counseling. But whether they work with individuals or groups is not at issue here. The question is, "Do the guidance departments regard themselves, and are they regarded by the system, as consultants to the system about pupil growth and development"? Guidance staffs have made suggestions in the past, particularly about new or modified course offerings judged appropriate to student needs; and such suggestions have been taken seriously and sometimes adopted. But in a broader sense, the answer to the question is, "No, they are not so regarded, nor do they regard themselves in this way."

There are at least two reasons for this. First, the concept of a guidance department with a heavy commitment to working with the existing school structure as an instrument for enhancing the growth and development of youngsters exists in the literature (in terms about as general as these), but is neither advocated by professional associations in guidance, promoted in training programs, expected by school administrators, or practiced in schools. It is, in short, an unusual view, though not a novel one. It is, however, a necessary view, in the judgment of the team.

The second reason concerns Plainfield rather than a conception of guidance. Plainfield does not appear to be a system in which the upward flow of educational ideas is encouraged. There is no director of pupil personnel services, and department heads in the pupil personnel fields, including guidance, appear to have limited advisory powers. They can make suggestions, of course, but they are not expected to make major suggestions. It is the expectation, or lack of it, that is important, not the existence of particular sub-structures.

An example, which may have been brought about by the tensions existing between school system and community and may not be typical, occurred earlier this spring in connection with plans for guidance in Plainfield High School. The superintendent in his annual budget message to the Board of Education, as reported in "Report to the Community from Board of Education, Plainfield, New Jersey," No. 5, March 1969, made several suggestions about the guidance program in the senior high school. The counseling staff of the high school took exception to what they regarded as sharp criticism of their department without adequate prior discussion with them; in addition they disagreed with some of the recommendations. They aired their strong objections in the local newspaper. That there was disagreement, or even that the disagreement became public, is not the tragedy; the tragedy is that the guidance staff believes that the disagreements were almost entirely public and were not part of thorough going internal discussions about guidance policy.

The Guidance Department Under Fire
Criticisms from Within and Without the School

Four sets of recommendations for guidance, principally in the senior high school, came to the attention of the study team; criticisms are implicit in all four. These recommendations are reviewed here.

The recommendations by the Urban Coalition Committee and the Black-White concensus are strikingly similar. Most of these recommendations appear sound. They suggest a system-wide director of pupil services to improve coordination; increased clerical assistance and an increase in counseling staff; introduction of guidance services in the elementary schools; staggered hours to better accommodate working parents; and assignment of counselors to students regardless of sex or race (in the high school, counselors are assigned by sex; they are not assigned by race in any school). There is a suggestion that guidance interns from nearby colleges be utilized, for which the rationale is not entirely clear, and a suggestion that a counselor without assigned students (a "floating counselor") be available in the high school for non-scheduled interviews with students who need help. The Urban Coalition speaks of the need for a "thrust" for a "guidance program that permeates the whole school system" and offers to help press for such a "thrust." This last recommendation is similar to the major recommendations of the study team which are developed briefly in the concluding section.

The NAACP education committee recommends an increase in numbers of counselors in the junior and senior high schools, an increase in the number of Negro counselors; and an in-service program for counselors.

The study team finds these suggestions useful and assumes that, in the main, they are welcomed by the guidance departments. The difficulty is that, for the most part, they do not affect existing structure and purpose. They would result in increased service, and possibly better overall organization of pupil services; but the orientation of pupil services to individual students as their needs become manifest is not challenged.[1]

The fourth set of recommendations formed part of the annual budget message to the Board of Education by the superintendent of schools, in March 1969, and were referred to in an earlier section in another connection. The superintendent's recommendations emphasize student needs, especially personal needs, which he states are not adequately met. He recommends additional staff, closer relationships between counselors and students, and closer relationships between administration and guidance, presumably along lines already being attempted at Hubbard Junior High School. He suggests that a portion of the high school counseling staff work with college-bound students and that others be assigned to "deal with personal relationships." (The Black-White consensus has publicly taken issue with this proposal, labeling it "discriminatory" and productive of "an unhealthy attitude within the student body.") He recommends additional guidance staff members at all three high schools. These additional persons are "Home-Community Personnel" in the junior high schools, and "Home-School Coordinators" in the senior high school.[2]

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[1] This remark both neglects the Urban Coalition's suggestion that services "permeate the system" and anticipates the major suggestions of the study team.

[2] It was not clear to the study team from the written report whether these home-school coordinators were the same persons who would form that part of the high school staff to deal with personal relationships, or whether they were a third category of counselors.

The superintendent's suggestions strike the study team as speaking to important issues; he apparently wants the network of counselor relationships with pupils, teachers, administration, families and community intensified. An intensification of such relationships clearly seem desirable. The plan for achieving this is not entirely clear to the study team, but appears to create a division of labor within the guidance departments. Such divisions of labor seem to the study team to partition the students' needs in a manner that does not correspond to the interlocking manner in which the needs are organized within the students. To illustrate (and perhaps to misunderstand the proposals), to whom is the college-bound student to turn if he has a "personal" problem? Will families be working with counselors different from those working with their children? Even as these questions are raised, it appears that we are over-interpreting the degree of specialization in function intended within the guidance department; but the proposals, after several readings, remain unclear in their implications for counselor functioning.

Conclusions of the Study Team

The study team recognized that it was in the role of an outsider coming in, observing, reporting, and leaving. It can afford luxuries that the superintendent cannot; for example, it can make general suggestions without having the responsibility for defining specifics for implementation. The suggestions are general in nature; but this is because we believe they must be.

Suggestion One

There are practical needs for counselor personnel, clerical personnel, and space; for greater coordination of pupil personnel services, possibly by appointing an overall director; and for more flexible hours for parents. These have all been proposed by interested groups, and many were suggested by counselors in interviews. Proposals such as these are generally supported by the study team.

Suggestion Two

The school counselors are, as agents of the school, charged with the task of making professional recommendations to students and their parents about ability group assignments. The study group obtained no evidence to suggest that they were carrying out their task differently than school officials expected. As suggested elsewhere, the problem lies more with the plan than its execution. If, for example, the school system chose to let students and their parents opt freely for ability group levels in courses, it would be a simple matter for counselors to present a professional opinion but make it very clear that the choice was entirely open. We believe that such a procedure would be an improvement, but we further believe the plan needs to be changed, not just tinkered with. The fact appears to be that the operation of the ability grouping plan is not a product of idiosyncratic beliefs on the part of counselors; they are carrying out expectations. Counselor expectations in this role must be discussed in connection with a consideration of the entire plan.

Suggestion Three

We believe that the principal change needed in the guidance departments is a change in the scope of their responsibility. The guidance departments should be given an important, though not exclusive, role in attending to pupil emotional, social, intellectual, and vocational development and actively proposing activities and changes in the system to enhance these aspects of development. Under such a conception of the department's responsibility, counselors would continue to counsel individually and in groups, to work with larger groups for information-giving and discussion purposes, to provide an educational and occupational information service, etc. But a new kind of responsibility would be added which would result in a basic change in their orientation to their work and the school's expectations of them.

Perhaps it is best to illustrate through concrete example. Suppose the impact of grading practices on students came to the attention of counselors, as surely it must. One possibility is to counsel individuals or groups who are not faring well in school. But another possibility is to collect data on such practices, propose (but probably not chair) a meeting of relevant persons to consider the grading practices themselves. Suppose the counselors notice that substantial numbers of students are not finding a place in the extra-curricular program of the school. They could -- and perhaps should -- urge individual students who have a special need for social development to join a school club or other activity; but they could also study student involvement in the program and its apparent effects and, again, recommend group study directed at program improvement. Take the matter of strained relations between Black and White students, preferably at a point where tensions are less than at present; again the guidance departments would be expected to initiate study, discussion, and action to improve intergroup relations, since pupil development is centrally involved.

The illustrations are not intended to suggest that no one else should attend to matters such as these; but they are intended to suggest that a guidance department should be strongly oriented in this direction.

Suggestion Four

The increased -- and changed -- expectations of the guidance departments outlined in (Suggestion Three), above, would require a serious commitment to sharing decision-making powers in the Plainfield School System far more widely than they are now shared. We have asked not just that ideas be permitted to flow upward more freely, but that the generation of ideas -- in this case about pupil development -- be considered a responsibility. The system, in effect, agrees to be responsive to such ideas, not necessarily of course, to accept them.

Suggestion Five

The insistence on an upward flow of ideas would not be confined to the guidance departments. All departments and subgroups in the school would be expected to generate ideas and plans. The foci of their concerns would vary, but there would be considerable overlap. In short, the guidance departments would often be initiating ideas or proposing plans in conjunction with non-guidance personnel. Productive staff interaction would increase appreciably.

Suggestion Six

The implementation of these ideas has not been discussed. Merely creating the expectation throughout the system is difficult enough; there are also problems of time, priorities, and effective committee operation. One suggestion is made, however: a committee might be established composed of teachers, students, and parents, as well as counselors, representatives from special services, and possibly an administrator. The committee's focus of concern would be pupil development, not just the functioning of the guidance department. Its purpose would be to study aspects of pupil development, set in motion ideas, and possibly formulate proposals. In the doing, it would involve others, and suggest new ways of attacking problems of pupil development, possibly even reorganizing itself in the process. It is intended as a "starter" committee, not necessarily the eventual structural arrangement.

CHAPTER IV

STAFF ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS REGARDING GROUPING PROCEDURES AND RELATED PRACTICES

Introduction

Grouping procedures have been identified as a means for providing appropriate learning experiences for pupils. The available evidence concerning the effectiveness of different grouping plans is not very helpful, since the results are inconclusive and do not substantiate claims made for any particular grouping procedure. The inconsistent and conflicting findings are not very surprising when one considers the many interrelated variables associated with grouping and, thus, the complexity of research in this area.

Grouping pupils on the basis of any criteria can only define the set of characteristics that are considered relevant to the learning experiences being planned. A host of other factors, such as instructional materials, time allocation, teaching procedures and student attitude, influence the effectiveness of instruction that proceeds within the framework of grouping. While the necessity for and importance of grouping procedures is recognized, it is also important to take into account the presence of other factors which impinge upon the grouping plan.

One of the factors which has been identified as being related to the effectiveness of grouping procedures is that of teacher attitude toward the plan. When teachers are in favor of a particular plan, all other things being equal, the results seem to indicate consistently that results are favorable. One of the major concerns of this study therefore was an assessment of teacher opinion regarding the grouping procedures presently used in the Plainfield School System. Also included in the survey of teacher opinion are concerns identified by teachers in the system as being related to the effectiveness of the instructional program and thereby related either directly or indirectly to the grouping policies.

Procedures

In addition to the general concerns appropriate for any school system, specific factors related to the Plainfield schools were identified in an attempt to make the results as meaningful and useful as possible. The questionnaire designed by the team specifically for use in the Plainfield Public Schools was composed of three major sections. First, three sub-sections designed in the abstract to provide information on factors to be considered in the grouping of students, effectiveness of grouping practices and consequences of grouping practices. In terms of content these sections contain items based upon educational research and are not "place specific"; that is, any staff in any school system could respond to the items, even though they were constructed specifically for use in Plainfield. Second, a section was composed of items that are "place specific." The team decided upon areas of concern as called for by the outline of the study. Interviews with staff were then held to determine the nature of local concern with respect to these areas. The areas represent the categories 3-11 listed below as the sections for reporting results. Third, a section relating to school community relations, also presented in the questionnaire to parents, was included to provide the staff's point of view. Thus, the items included reflect the concerns which the study team and the staff viewed as being important considerations when opinions on grouping are assessed. The overall design and the format, however, were determined by the study team.

Several categories were identified and items were included relating to each one. The categories were:

Effectiveness of Grouping Systems

Consequences of Grouping

Bases for Grouping

Grouping Policies, Practice, and Consequences

Grouping and Attendance

Instructional Program Considerations

Instructional Process

Marking, Progress and Promotion

Internal Articulation

School-Community Relations

Professional Roles, Decision-making and
In-Service Education

While recognizing that the categories are not mutually exclusive, the team agreed that the areas identified do include the aspects of grouping practice and its consequences which would provide useful results in an organized fashion.

The investigation of such an extensive number of concerns and the desire to survey the entire staff of the school system posed the problem of analyzing a large volume of data. The decision was made to use a format for the instrument which would be compatible with computer processing. Therefore, each item and each section of the instrument was designed with computer application in mind. The availability of data processing equipment allowed the team to proceed with a more extensive analysis as well as to collect extensive data from each professional in the system.

In addition to opinions concerning the categories previously cited, the instrument asked for background information concerning each of the teacher-participants in the study. Information concerning teaching experience in the school system, grade level assignment, professional preparation, position, sex, race, subject matter field, and building unit-school assignment was collected. The purpose of these data was to provide different bases for summarizing and comparing points of view. For example, comparisons were made between the opinions of teachers at the elementary, junior high, and senior high levels of instruction.

The design developed for analyzing the data included provision for determining agreement and disagreement, intensity of direction, and the significance of difference between various respondents to each item and to groups of items.

After the instrument was developed and the procedures for analysis of the data were determined, the questionnaire was administered to the professional staff members in each of the schools in the district during a faculty meeting scheduled for this purpose. Questionnaires were provided for absentees in an attempt to provide for total participation. It should be noted at this point that absolute anonymity was assured. No individual, except those who desired, could be identified. The completed questionnaires were used for data collection and were not made available to persons not on the study team. Each individual was asked to comment on the final page of the instrument regarding his personal perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the school system and to make suggestions concerning solutions to identified problems. If the form were signed and a request were made, a member of the team tried to arrange an interview with the respondent. When respondent points of view were clearly defined in the signed statement a follow-up interview did not seem necessary.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with a number of individuals to gather additional information and to verify the preliminary findings from the questionnaire.

After the questionnaires were collected, the responses were recorded on IBM cards and a preliminary computer analysis was run. From the initial results, a decision was made that results based on teaching experience in the school system, instructional levels, defined as elementary (K-6), junior high school (7-9) and senior high school 10-12), and race were revealing significant differences of opinion. The other background characteristics, such as advanced educational preparation did not seem to be related to differences of opinion and were not used for further analysis.

When all of the teachers in the system were considered, three categories of experience emerged as providing obvious differences of opinion. The categories of experience for all teachers used for further analysis were 1-3 years, 4-9 years, and 10 or more years of experience in the school system. It should be pointed out that these groupings are based on the categories used in the questionnaire and should not be given more importance than they warrant due to the limitation stated. It might very well be true that other groupings would have produced similar or even more meaningful differences.

The second grouping by experience which emerged from the analysis was associated with the results when analyzed in terms of race. The opinions of White staff members, when viewed independently, varied by experience. Experienced White staff members, as identified by ten or more years in the system, and those with less than ten years experience (1-9 years) varied significantly on a number of items. The same procedure did not prove helpful when the Black staff members were viewed independently, perhaps because there are so few Black staff members with ten or more years experience in the system.

On the basis of the evidence available, a complete analysis of responses was made using the categories cited above. Table 27 shows the number of respondents in each category. The total number of questionnaires returned exceeded 90% of the professional staff of the Plainfield Public Schools.

The term "saliency," as used in the tables and the text, refers to the intensity of agreement or disagreement. The terms salient and strong are used synonymously. During the analysis of data, mean scores on the agreement scale, which ranged from 1-5, were computed. Scores which fell between 1-2 (indicating strong agreement) and 4-5 (indicating strong disagreement) were considered salient. This is particularly meaningful since we are dealing with average scores for large groups of respondents.

On the tables and in the text, the extent of difference between groups is expressed as high (H), moderate (M), or low (L). In order to be considered a real difference a statistical check had to be satisfied which controlled for chance. Since we are dealing with a restricted scale, one-third of a scale point was the range between each category of high, moderate, and low.

Findings of the Study

Each of the sections which follow discuss the findings in relation to the categories of concern identified previously. The opinions in each category are compared on the basis of elementary, junior high, and senior high staff viewpoints; experience in the school system (1-3, 4-9, 10+ years) and racial composition (Black, White, White 1-9 years experience, White 10+ years experience.) Agreement and disagreement on items by groups, intensity of agreement or disagreement (saliency of the item), and differing points of view are discussed. The findings are then analyzed and recommendations are made for consideration of the school system.

Effectiveness of the Current Grouping System

Members of the Plainfield Public Schools staff were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the current grouping system as it relates to the educational needs of students with different specified characteristics. The characteristics presented involved age, race, family income and intelligence. Each set of characteristics was presented as a discrete set, so that respondents were not asked to judge the cumulative effect of any particular pattern of characteristics. Grouping practices for young students, for high income students, and for Black students were assessed separately, but practices in

TABLE 27

TEACHER - QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNS
(The Sample)

TEACHERS	N
Total	488
White	348
Black	81
Other or no response	59
Elementary school	229
Junior high school	108
Senior high school	103
Other (Guidance, Librarian,etc)	48
Experience 1 - 3 years	215
Experience 4 - 9 years	110
Experience 10 years or more	162

	Total	White	Other	Black	1-3 yrs.	4-9 yrs.	10+yrs.
	N	N	NR	N	N	N	N
Elementary	229	158	30	41	112	39	78
Junior high	108	72	15	21	62	20	26
Senior high	103	82	11	10	33	26	43
Other	48	36	3	9	8	25	15
Total	488	348	59	81	215	110	162

N- Number
NR- No Reply

relation to a student who was young, Black and also from a high income family, for example, were not assessed.

The staff indicated the perceived effectiveness of the grouping system by marking one of four possible responses: very well, fairly well, not well or poorly. By assigning a numeric values of from 1 to 4 to each of the possible responses in the sequence listed above, it was possible to derive a mean score for each of the student characteristics listed. In addition, categories of respondents were also established in terms of the school level - elementary, junior high or senior high; the length of experience in the school system - 1-3 years, 4-9 years and ten years or more; and in terms of race. For each of these categories, in addition to mean scores for each item, a mean of means was computed to indicate the effect that organizational structure, experience or race might have on perception of overall effectiveness. Again, the variables were not interrelated; thus, it is not possible to present numeric data in terms of a young White elementary school teacher as compared with an older, White elementary school teacher. Since one knows, however, that teachers especially at the high school, are almost entirely White and that teachers with ten or more years of experience are almost certain to be White, it is possible to consider the logical relationship between certain factors.

Since the scale values have a restricted range of only 4 points (from 1 to 4), differences between observed means of one-third point or more are statistically significant.

Results. The staff as a whole indicated that the grouping system is generally meeting the needs of students "fairly well." The mean of means for the total staff is 2.103, which is not significantly different from 2.000 on the scale.

According to the staff, the age level, which is equivalent to the instructional level of the student, is not a significant factor, as the minor variations from the mean of 2.000 are not statistically meaningful. One may interpret this to mean that in the eyes of the staff there are neither inequities nor positive values in the grouping system as it operates within the instructional levels of the educational program.

While the overall grouping system is seen in a positive way by the total staff and applications within the units do not modify its effectiveness, student characteristics, other than age, influence the effectiveness of the grouping practices. As the data in Table 29

TABLE 28

How Well Do You Think The Present Grouping System Now Serves The Educational Needs Of Each Of The Following Types Of Children?

(Effectiveness of Grouping As Reported by Total Staff)

	No Response		Very Well		Fairly Well		Not Well		Poorly	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Students ages 6 - 9	64	13.3	79	16.5	195	40.6	84	17.5	58	12.1
2. Students ages 10-14	71	14.8	48	10.0	200	41.7	101	21.0	60	12.5
3. Students ages 15-18	70	14.6	78	16.2	162	33.7	96	20.0	74	15.4
4. Black students	33	6.9	68	14.2	173	36.0	93	19.4	113	23.5
5. White students	33	6.9	102	21.2	233	48.5	65	13.5	47	9.8
6. High income students	39	8.1	140	29.2	204	42.5	56	11.7	41	8.5
7. Middle income students	41	8.5	102	21.2	230	47.9	68	14.2	39	8.1
8. Low income students	38	7.9	62	12.9	163	34.0	116	24.2	101	21.0
9. Students with high intelligence	28	5.8	162	33.7	148	30.8	79	16.5	63	13.1
10. Students with average intelligence	29	6.0	105	21.9	229	47.7	76	15.8	41	8.5
11. Students with low intelligence	28	5.8	74	15.4	116	24.2	119	24.8	143	29.8

indicate, income, intelligence and race of students operate in such a way as to modify the effectiveness of the system. It appears that the staff believes it is not the grouping system that has any inherent weaknesses, but rather the variations among students that generate problems. In other words, as a grouping system the one in Plainfield is like those in many other schools in its basic outline. As a system of a particular kind, it is well conceived. The reason it does not work any better than it does is that the students being grouped are different from those students for whom the system was originally designed.

The range of mean scores indicated the extent to which the system is dysfunctional for students with different characteristics. The range is from 1.833, which is not significantly different from "fairly well," to 2.708 close to "not well" and significantly different from "fairly well." In terms of effectiveness, the staff believes the system functions best for students from high income families, students with high intelligence and White students None of these factors taken individually, however, have a significant positive effect, as the difference from the general mean and the differences among the means are not statistically meaningful.

Even though no single factor contributes more than an average degree positively to the effectiveness of the grouping practices, three different factors have negative effects: low income, low intelligence and being Black. The differential effect between being poor and being Black is significant, but the differential effect between being poor and having low intelligence is not. As explained earlier due to the intentional design of the questionnaire, it is not possible to make inferences concerning the interrelations among categories. We would go beyond the data to suggest that being poor and having low intelligence has greater negative effect than being Black and having low intelligence even though a common sense reading of the data might indicate such an inference. Of course, the absolute difference in mean scores is higher between being White and having a low income than it is between being Black and having a low income. The difference is statistically significant, but not logically meaningful since the score for White is in the positive direction. The difference does further substantiate the conclusion that for the total staff, income is more of a contributing factor than is race.

Differences Among Staff. Differences among various sectors of the staff are greater than the differences among responses of the total staff to specific student characteristics items. The overall assessment of general effectiveness, therefore, must be qualified.

TABLE 29

HOW DO YOU THINK THE PRESENT GROUPING SYSTEM NOW SERVES THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF CHILDREN?[1]

RESPONSES	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
Students age 6-9	1.985	Fairly Well
Students age 10-14	2.065	Fairly Well
Students age 15-18	2.054	Fairly Well
Black Students	2.385	Somewhat less than Fairly Well
White students	1.981	Fairly Well
High income students	1.833	Fairly Well
Middle income students	1.921	Fairly Well
Low income students	2.708	Almost Not Well
Students with high intelligence	1.973	Fairly Well
Students with average intelligence	1.990	Fairly Well
Students with low intelligence	2.573	Less than Fairly Well
Mean for all staff	2.103	Fairly Well
Blacks	2.620	Almost Not Well
Whites	2.022	Fairly Well
Experience 1-3 years	2.234	Fairly Well
Experience 4-9 years	2.181	Fairly Well
Experience 10 years +	1.892	Fairly Well
Elementary school staff	2.189	Fairly Well
Junior high staff	2.464	Less than Fairly Well
Senior high staff	1.700	Better than Fairly Well

Effectiveness as Ranked by Blacks	Mean	Effectiveness as Ranked by Whites	Mean
1. Student with high intelligence	1.909	1. High income students	1.836
2. High income students	1.974	2. Middle income students	1.879
3. Middle income students	2.182	3. Students with average intelligence	1.899
4. White students	2.299	4. Students age 10-14	1.931
5. Students age 6-9	2.377	5. Students 15-18	1.931
6. Students with average intelligence	2.416	6. Students age 6-9	1.937
7. Students age 10-14	2.779	7. White students	1.954
8. Students age 15-18	2.909	8. Students with high intelligence	2.011
9. Low income students	3.208	9. Black students	2.204
10. Black students	3.377	10. Low income students	2.233
11. Students with low intelligence	3.390	11. Students with low intelligence	2.425
RANGE:	1.481	RANGE:	.589

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[1] RESPONDENTS: 480 members of the school staff.

KEY:		
	1.000	Very Well
	2.000	Fairly Well
	3.000	Not Well
	4.000	Poorly

When calculated mean scores reflecting instructional level, experience, and racial background of staff members are compared in terms of absolute scores, one finds that on not one single item is any of the other seven sectors more positive about the effectiveness of grouping than is the senior high school staff. On one item, that of being Black, the teachers with ten years experiences or more and the high school teachers have the same mean score. The score for the high school staff is significantly different from all other scores except for the score reflecting the factor of ten years or more of experience.

The mean score difference (.764) between the high school staff (1.700) and the junior high school staff (2.464) is significant and represents a substantial difference of opinion. With respect to differences between the junior high and the senior high, on no single item is there less than one-half scale point difference. It is interesting to note that the greatest absolute difference between the junior high school and the senior high school represents the difference between the junior high's relative negative score (2.650) and the high school's quite positive score (1.490) on the item "serving the educational needs of children aged 10 through 14." In this context it must be remembered that the initial judgment concerning placement into groups at the high school takes place in the junior high school. One may conclude that the junior high schools do not relish the task of grouping students for the high school and they are less certain about its effectiveness for students in general than is the high school that relies upon the grouping established in the junior high schools.

Between the junior highs and the elementary schools there are differences, but these represent the same items as for the total staff; namely, low income, low intelligence and being Black. Unlike the total staff, however, the differences in means among the low income, low intelligence and being Black are not significant; thus, all three are equal in generating negative effects within the grouping system.

The senior high school staff, therefore, is most unlike the total staff in its overall estimate of the effectiveness of grouping and is significantly more positive toward the present grouping practices than is the junior high or the elementary schools.

The mean score difference between the junior and senior high schools (.764) are greater than is the difference (.548) between White staff members (2.022) and Black staff members (2.620). The scores for the Whites alone are not different from that of the total staff, which is reasonable since the staff is largely White. The difference between Blacks and Whites is significant on all items except for their common agreement on the positive effect of the system for students with either high income, middle income, or high intelligence. Unlike the Whites, the Blacks see low intelligence and being Black as having greater negative consequences than low income. While the Blacks see high income and high intelligence as being equal in effecting positive consequences, the Whites tend to see high income as being more important than high intelligence.

The younger teachers who have been in the system one to three years, regardless of whether they are Black or White, differ with those teachers who have been in the system ten years or more. Those teachers who have been in the system 4 to 9 years, however, do not significantly differ with the older teachers.

In conclusion, it is clear that the greatest source of difference is between the young, Black junior high teachers and the older, White, senior high teachers. As the figures on the description of the chart showing sampling indicate, at the junior high school level the staff is composed of about one-fifth Blacks, but at the high school of only about one-tenth. In regard to length of experience, about one-fourth of the junior high staff has ten years of experience or more, while nearly half of the senior high school staff has this longevity. The hiring and placement practices have been such that fewer Blacks were employed for the secondary school, and of those Blacks who were employed, more were placed in the junior high schools than at the high school. This pattern clearly contributed to the currently observed differences of opinion when level, experience and race were established as categories of analysis.

The difference of means between the Blacks and the older teachers is .728 but between the Blacks and the senior high school is .920, almost a complete scale point -- the difference between fairly well and not well. It should be pointed out, as indicated in Table 29 that while proportionally, the younger Blacks may assess the grouping system in a more negative way than do the Whites, there are more actual Whites than Blacks who express negative opinions. A review of the columns "Not well" and "Poorly" clearly shows that in not one single case does the actual number of Blacks with a less than positive opinion exceed the number of Whites with a similar opinion.

Factors in Grouping

The data to this point have established the nature of the differences of opinion among staff members with respect to the

TABLE 30

How well do you think the present grouping system now serves the educational needs of each of the following types of children?

(Frequency of Response by Race)

		Very Well		Fairly Well		Not Well		Poorly	
		B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W
1.	Childrenages six through nine	7	64	30	142	16	62	17	35
2.	Children ages ten through fourteen	20	44	30	153	30	62	21	34
3.	Children ages fifteen through eighteen	2	68	14	130	22	68	32	35
4.	Black children	2	60	10	146	18	65	46	55
5.	White children	12	77	40	170	7	53	16	26
6.	High income children	25	98	33	153	7	45	10	25
7.	Middle income children	13	82	37	167	15	46	9	25
8.	Low income children	2	56	12	130	23	83	38	53
9.	Children with high intelligence	26	119	35	99	5	65	9	47
10.	Children with average intelligence	9	89	33	170	21	48	12	22
11.	Children with low intelligence	3	64	6	94	18	92	48	79

differential effectiveness of the current grouping policy in relation to specific student characteristics. The data have not dealt with possible differences of opinion regarding factors that should be taken into account when decisions about grouping students are made. This section presents staff opinion concerning the bases for grouping.

In considering grouping, there are several different aspects that present problems: (1) What student characteristics shall be taken into account -- intellectual-academic and/or physical/social; (2) Shall personal judgement or objective, numeric calculations be given primary emphasis; and (3) To what extent do non-ability and non-achievement factors, such as punctuality, probable future, interest and effort, receive attention?

Staff members responded to a list of 19 different possible factors and were asked to rate them on a scale that ranged from 5 (very important) to 1 (definitely should not be considered in making decisions about grouping). Again, by assigning numeric values to points on the scale it was possible to arrive at mean scores ranging from 1 to 5 to test differences between mean scores to determine if apparent differences might be a chance occurence.,

Since earlier analysis showed that the greatest difference of opinions was between the younger Black staff members and the older White staff members, even when several other factors were introduced, these data were analyzed only in terms of Black-White differences.

There are differences between Black and White teachers that are statistically significant; thus there are differences that probably did not result from chance. The nature of the differences in terms of the positive or negative direction of the opinion, however, is more important than the statistical significance of the differences. In not one case in 19 is there a difference such that one group thinks the factor should be considered while the other group thinks the factor should not be considered. The differences are a matter of degree rather than of kind. This is not to say that the existing disagreements are unimportant, but rather that they are somewhat subtle and apparently deal with the operation of the policy, not with the basic notion of the stated policy.

With respect to those factors that should not be considered when grouping students for instructional purposes, both Black staff members and White staff members agree that neither the student's sex, the location of his residence, the occupation of the head of the household, nor his status or prestige among his peers should be taken into

TABLE 31

CONSIDERATIONS IN GROUPING STUDENTS FOR INSTRUCTION

Black Staff Members			White Staff Members		
	A. Should be Considered			**B. Should be considered**	
1.	Reading ability	+1.235*	1.	Reading ability	+1.695
2.	Assessment of Counselor/psychologist	+1.000	2.	Assessment of counselor/psychologist	+1.128
3.	Social Maturity	+ .852	3.	Ability to write English	+1.126
4.	Ability to write English	+ .667	4.	Achievement test scores	+ .972
5.	Ability to work with numbers	+ .667	5.	Ability to work with numbers	+ .961
6.	Intelligence quotient	+ .667	6.	Intelligence quotient	+ .855
			7.	Punctuality with assignments	+ .587
			8.	Assessment by former teacher	+ .578
			9.	Regularity of attendance	+ .573
			10.	Social maturity	+ .573
	B. Should not be Considered			**B. Should not be Considered**	
1.	Race or ethnic background	-1.062	1.	Race or ethnic background	-1.307
2.	Occupation of family	- .963	2.	Occupation of family	-1.285
3.	Location of residence	- .889	3.	Location of residence	- .883
4.	Peer status or prestige	- .753	4.	Sex of student	- .788
5.	Sex of student	- .566	5.	Peer status or prestige	- .718
	C. Makes Little Difference			**C. Makes Little Difference**	
1.	Manual dexterity, coordination	+ .481	1.	Manual dexterity, coordination	+ .204
2.	Achievement test scores	+ .346	2.	Probable future	+ .134
3.	Probable future	+ .306	3.	Willingness to speak in class	- .101
4.	Health	+ .259	4.	Health	+ .095
5.	Punctuality with assignments	+ .235			
6.	Willingness to speak in class	- .049			
7.	Assessment of former teacher	+ .012			
8.	Regularity of school attendance	- .000			

*Figures indicate difference from 3.000, "makes little or no difference.". The plus sign represents a positive value.

account. This opinion is very interesting in light of the recent research concerned with the peer culture of youth and adolescents. When students group themselves for activities, they make their choices on the very factors that the staff think should be ignored. From the student's point of view, therefore, the staff's notion of grouping represents a contradiction of their basic patterns of behavior. This point is very significant in a residential community in which housing patterns are likely to encourage economic and racially segregated sub-groupings among youth of a given age range. Research shows that when these previously formed sub-groups are randomly dispersed into groupings as impersonal and formal as classes, are likely to be, especially at the high school, individuals do not change their alliances to the primary groups from which they came. The school, therefore, by ignoring the basis upon which students group themselves, in effect only reinforces the structure of the groups as they form outside the school. With respect to grouping for instructional purposes the staff's idea of grouping says in effect that the school should ignore the immediate social context in which students live. Grouping, therefore, is almost solely for academic, rather than socio-civic, purposes. The school, through its grouping practices, does not accept responsibility for ameliorating social problems as incorporated in the behavior of its students. We are not suggesting that socio-civic factors or consequences should be the sole basis for grouping. What we are suggesting, as will be dealt with in the section on conclusions and recommendations, is that both sets of variables should somehow be taken into consideration, if not for each course at least for the educational program as a totality.

Black and White staff members are also in agreement about the relative importance of four factors: the student's manual dexterity and coordination; the student's probable future; his health; and his willingness to speak in class. There is a disagreement that approaches statistical significance between the Blacks and Whites about the importance of manual dexterity and coordination. Research shows that dexterity and coordination are of importance for the development of reading and writing skills among young children. Since a larger percentage of Black respondents than of White respondents, in terms of the total number of Black and White staff members, are teachers in the elementary schools, the Black elementary school teachers may have more power to determine their group score than the White elementary teachers had to influence the total White score. The difference in the score, therefore, may more nearly represent the structure of the group than it does a difference in professional expertise and opinion among staff members with comparable positions.

The item on "student's health" probably has little meaning when taken in isolation, but when this item is related to the question about student's use of drugs in another part of this report it becomes somewhat more meaningful. During interviews in the schools, some staff members, both Blacks and Whites, who had extensive interaction with students outside the regular classroom commented that "it is as easy to get drugs in the hallway of this school as it is to get food in the cafeteria." The total staff's opinion on the item in the questionnaire reflected a neutral opinion; that is, they neither agreed nor disagreed. We do not conclude that students use drugs, as we have no data, but we do conclude that the staff is not very knowledgeable one way or the other and that their lack of knowledge may relate to their opinion that health is not a significant factor to be considered when grouping for instructional purposes. Student health as a basis for grouping does not appear to have much importance among members of the staff.

In terms of the factors that should be considered when making decisions about grouping students for instructional purposes, both Blacks and Whites are in agreement that reading ability, social maturity, an indication of intelligence quotient, ability to write English, ability to work with numbers, and the comments and assessments of guidance counselors and/or psychologists should be taken into consideration. On three of the factors, reading ability, ability to write English and IQ score, the White staff members assign a significantly higher positive value than do the Black staff members. This could mean that for the Whites the relation between potential verbal ability (IQ) and demonstrated verbal skills (reading and writing) as a general index of effort is more important for grouping than are the other factors. We are inclined to interpret the data in this way, in view of the fact that White teachers, unlike Black teachers, believe that achievement test scores, punctuality with class assignments, assessments by former teachers, and regularity of school attendance are factors that should be taken into account. These additional factors probably point to the implications of a phrase that was mentioned over and over again in interviews with teachers: "cooperativeness of students."

In light of the general discussion about Black separatism and special programs for students from various minorities, it is at first glance somewhat puzzling to note that both Blacks and Whites agree that racial or ethnic background should not be taken into account for the purposes of grouping. This score parallels the score of another item assessing opinion about the desirability of providing distinctively different programs of study for Black and White students. On this latter item, both groups again agreed that such provisions were undesirable. Scores on other related items and information provided through interviews lead us to the conclusion that the Blacks essentially are not negative about the grouping policy as an abstract statement, but rather with its differential application to Black and White students. The Blacks believe that when a Black student and a White student have basically comparable ability to read, write and to compute, the mutually acceptable basis for grouping, the White student is placed in a higher group than is the Black student because the White student's social behavior is interpreted as being more "cooperative." The operation of the grouping system, therefore, may rest in part upon differing interpretations of observed social behavior. We are attempting only to indicate that such an opinion exists. The existence of such a pattern of behavior, rather than of opinion about behavior, is an empirically observable phenomenon that can be indirectly observed through an analysis of student records, as is presented in another section of this report.

Consequences of Grouping

Organizational patterns of behavior, such as the grouping of students, have social consequences. This section presents the teachers' ideas about the consequences of grouping in terms of student characteristics; that is, to what extent does the grouping policy operate in such a way that certain student attributes and behaviors tend to be associated with specific groupings.

Teachers were given a list of 15 descriptive details about students. The question was as follows: "In your opinion, to what extent are the descriptions accurate for the students in the various groupings or levels of instruction within your elementary school classroom, the junior high school classes or in the high school classes in your department?" The following alternatives were provided for responses.

1= Accurate for students ONLY in the HIGHER levels or groups
2= Accurate for students ONLY in the AVERAGE levels or groups
3= Accurate for students ONLY in the LOWER levels or groups
4= Accurate for students in BOTH HIGHER and AVERAGE levels or groups
5= Accurate for students in BOTH LOWER and AVERAGE levels or groups
6= Accurate for students in BOTH HIGHER and LOWER levels or groups
7= Accurate for students in ALL groups or levels

We wish to call attention to response possibilities number 6 and 7. We were concerned that the possible responses listed might force the staff to think in terms of stereotypes. Had the possible responses provided only for clear-cut distinctions, such as "high," "middle," and "low" student groups, the staff would have been required to associate a given descriptive detail with a particular group of students, even though the staff might have thought that the characteristic was evenly distributed among or equally true of all students. Response number 6, therefore, was provided as a logical combination of class groups. Response number 7 was provided for those who wished to indicate a lack of correspondence between a given detail about students and any particular instructional grouping.

The data on effectiveness of the grouping policy indicated that low family income, low intelligence and being Black were factors with strong negative effects on the functioning of the policy. Over fifty per cent of the staff believe that students from professional families are found only in the higher or average groups, while about one-fourth think such students are found in all groups. One-fourth of the Blacks and one-third of the Whites think the students from professional families are found only in higher groups. When the father is an unskilled worker, the child is likely to be found in the lower or average group according to one-third of the staff, while another one-third say he is likely to be found in all groups. Only about 5 per cent believe such a student is found only in lower groups.

The staff apparently feel economic factors are very powerful but that the structure of the grouping system does not strictly parallel the socio-economic structure of the community, assuming "professional" and "unskilled worker" represent the range for that structure.

For an IQ of 111 or above, generally above average in heterogeneous student populations, over one-half of the staff say such students are found only in the average or higher groups. About 15% say they are to be found in all groups. One-fourth of the Whites and one-third of the Blacks think such students are found only in higher groups.

Below average reading skills, according to nearly one-half of the staff, are identified with students in the lower and average groups. One-fourth of the Blacks and one-fifth of the Whites think that students with below average reading skills are found only in the lower groups or levels of instruction. For both Blacks and Whites, about 15 per cent think that such students are found in all groups.

TABLE 32

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS IN VARIOUS ABILITY GROUPS AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS

		N. R.	Higher Only	Average Only	Lower Only	Higher & Average	Lower & Average	Higher & Lower	All Groups
1.	IQ of 111 or above	44	122	31	1	136	11	9	71
2.	Below average reading skills	43	3	12	79	9	202	8	73
3.	Father as professional	64	86	7	4	145	11	7	101
4.	Average academic record in previous classes	67	14	62	6	121	35	5	115
5.	Advanced physical maturity among age peers	64	16	19	41	48	61	10	166
6.	Non-conforming creative approach to situations	68	52	12	30	41	46	22	154
7.	Earned leadership status among peers	56	35	15	8	105	4	15	187
8.	Irregularity of school attendance	53	2	6	97	4	158	7	98
9.	High interest in education and learning	51	74	9	4	179	3	4	101
10.	Father as unskilled worker	57	0	10	28	11	158	7	154
11.	Parents active in community groups supportive of school	59	48	11	4	166	5	5	127
12.	Probable college success	51	57	10	4	236	7	2	58
13.	Punctuality with class assignments	62	39	11	7	176	14	4	112
14.	Negative attitude towards school	64	0	6	80	3	152	10	110
15.	Unwillingness to salute flag	160	3	5	67	3	47	6	134

It is apparent that the total staff, but the Blacks slightly more than the Whites, believe that intelligence quotient scores, family economic factors and reading skills are factors involved in the stratification of the student body. This could be interpreted to mean that the staff believes that the grouping system works in that it does sort out students in such a way that factors valued by the staff tend to cluster in various groupings.

Over one-third of the Blacks and Whites think that students with advanced physical maturity among their age peers and earned leadership status among peers are found among all groups of students. The staff does not think the system tends to cluster physically mature students in any particular type of groups. One-fourth of both Blacks and Whites, however, respond that earned leadership is found only among the higher and average groups.

On one item the staff was asked to indicate the effect of the grouping system on external affairs; namely, probable college success by students. Forty-eight per cent of the Blacks and 57 per cent of the Whites think that college success is probable only for the average and higher level students. One wonders to what extent the staff is knowledgeable of existing community college programs or Upward Bound projects designed to provide opportunities for students who might otherwise not gain admissions to the older colleges. If the staff is not knowledgeable of these programs and if they happen to teach lower level groupings of students, they may also assume that college success is neither possible nor probable. It is clear that only 13 per cent of the staff think that probable college success is open to students in all groups. Exactly the same number think that college success is probable only for the higher level students.

Over one-third of both Blacks and Whites believe that students with high interest in education and learning and students with parents active in community groups supportive of school are to be found in the average and higher groups. One-fourth of both groups think students with high interest in education and learning are to be found in all groups. More than one-fourth, but less than one-third, of both groups think that students with supportive parents are found in all groups. Interviews in the district provided information suggesting that the comparable figures on the questionnaire to some extent represent differences. The Blacks and some of the Whites apparently think that "high interest in education and learning" is not a prerequisite for schooling, but rather is a condition to be developed by the school in cooperation with the family. It follows, therefore, that if "parents active in community groups supportive of school" also cluster among students in high and average groups, that for some parents the school has not found a way of working cooperatively so as to lead to interest and support.

One-fifth of the staff, both Black and White, think that irregularity of school attendance is found among students in all groups. One-fifth also think that students with negative attitudes toward school are found in all groups. One-fifth of both groups think that irregular attendance and negative attitudes are found only in the lower groups. Over a third of both groups think that such factors are found among students in the average and lower groups.

Punctuality with class assignments, a factor very frequently mentioned in the interviews prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, is seen differently by Blacks and Whites. One-third of the Blacks, but one-half of the Whites, think that punctuality is a behavior associated with the average and higher groups. One-fourth of both groups think that punctuality is found among all groupings.

An analysis of responses by instructional units - elementary, junior high and senior high -- revealed very few differences of opinion that could be interpreted as reflecting differences in assignment to organizational units in the school system. One difference that did not appear in any of the other data is the simple fact that more of the elementary teachers than of any of the others failed to respond to the items. On every item about one-fifth of the elementary teachers, as opposed to only about 5 per cent of all other teachers, did not respond. The most plausible explanation is that the grouping practices, the relations with families, the classroom activities and the informality among pupils in the early primary grades all contribute to an instructional process in which the differences among students, as presented in the items, are either not apparent or inappropriate.

Differences among elementary, junior high and senior high teachers were apparent only for four items. First, twice as many junior high teachers as senior high teachers think that irregularity of attendance is attributable only to the lower groups (32 per cent versus 15 per cent). Fifty-eight per cent of the senior high staff, but 43 per cent of the junior high staff, believe that irregular attendance is attributable both to the lower and the average group. Neither group ascribes irregular attendance to the higher groups.

There is a progressive increment in opinion from the elementary schools to the senior high school that college success is probably primarily for the higher and average groups: 46 per cent elementary school teachers, 62 per cent junior high school teachers, and 74 per cent senior high teachers. At the high school, only 11 per cent believe that college success is probable for students in all groups.

Almost twice as many junior high staff members as senior high staff (28 per cent versus 16 per cent) believe that students with fathers as professionals are found only in the higher groups. Conversely, 30 per cent of the senior high but only 17 per cent of the junior high believe that such students are found in all groups.

More junior high staff (35 per cent) than senior high staff (20 per cent) believe that students with an IQ of 111 or above are found only in the higher groups. The senior high (17 per cent) more than the junior high (8 per cent) tend to see the students distributed among all groups. In the abstract, it would be reasonable to assume that above average students would not be found in all groupings. About the same number on both levels (40 per cent and 38 per cent) see students with above average intelligence in the average and higher groups. The immediate question is, "Why aren't more of the students with above average IQ scores perceived to be in the average and higher groups?" Our interpretation is that IQ scores reflect general verbal ability or, depending upon the test referred to, verbal and non-verbal ability. The score does not reflect specific substantive content achievement, interest in the area of study, or the personality of the student. It is also possible that many students with IQ scores above the national average are considered less than average in Plainfield.

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire was very carefully constructed so that staff members were not required to think in terms of stereotypes or to ascribe characteristics only to one grouping of students. After the data were collected, however, it was useful to re-order the data in an attempt to establish more clearly the White staff and the Black staff view regarding the impact of the grouping system. In order to do so, the percentages for those categories that involved more than one grouping, for example higher and average, were distributed between the pure categories to which they applied and a new percentage was computed separately for Whites and for Blacks. This procedure, by dealing with percentages computed on a constant base rather than with frequencies that represented actual people, essentially maintained the integrity of the data. We point out again, however, that the staff was not asked to and did not in fact reflect this style of stereotyped thinking.

TABLE 33

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS IN VARIOUS ABILITY GROUPS AS PERCEIVED BY BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS

				Higher Only		Average Only		Lower Only	
		Black	White	B	W	B	W	B	W
1.	IQ of 111 or above	10.4	10.3	51.78	50.23	31.63	29.78	6.28	8.58
2.	Below average reading skills	10.4	10.1	8.02	8.53	29.47	33.68	52.22	47.78
3.	Father as professional	18.2	14.4	47.23	45.78	23.83	28.78	10.83	10.93
4.	Average academic record in previous classes	15.6	15.8	27.73	27.3	43.33	41.95	13.43	15.75
5.	Advanced physical maturity among age peers	14.3	15.2	22.1	23.9	32.5	29.8	31.2	31.0
6.	Non-conforming creative approach to situations	19.5	15.2	27.52	32.67	26.22	24.97	11.67	19.77
7.	Earned leadership status among peers	13.0	13.2	36.62	37.03	32.07	30.73	17.42	18.83
8.	Irregularity of school attendance	14.3	12.1	8.45	9.72	25.35	28.77	52.0	49.52
9.	High interest in education and learning	11.7	12.1	42.9	47.77	33.15	31.07	12.35	9.17
10.	Father as unskilled worker	13.0	13.5	14.52	13.12	35.22	34.12	37.27	38.27
11.	Parents active in community groups supportive of school	13.0	14.1	52.25	41.22	41.2	33.02	13.65	11.77
12.	Probable college success	14.3	11.5	44.42	46.3	31.42	36.45	9.97	4.95
13.	Punctuality with class assignments	14.3	14.7	38.57	39.25	31.42	34.25	15.82	11.8
14.	Negative attitude towards school	11.7	15.8	11.94	9.78	24.94	29.03	51.59	45.38
15.	Unwillingness to salute flag	39.0	37.4	11.27	12.53	18.42	17.43	31.42	32.73

As the re-ordered data in Table 33 very clearly shows there are no major differences between the Black staff members and the White staff members concerning the consequences of grouping with respect to the stratification of students on the basis of selected descriptive details.

The finding of common opinion leads us, as did the data on the factors considered significant as the basis for grouping, to the conclusions that differences among Blacks and Whites is not so much about the grouping policy as an instructional organization device but rather with the application of that policy and with the nature of the student-teacher interaction after students are grouped for instruction. The Blacks consistently think that the more objective data, such as test scores, should be given primary consideration, because when personal judgement is given the emphasis the decisions are such that Black students do not receive the benefit of doubt. Some even are of the opinion that an area of doubt does not exist. The Whites, on the other hand, see teacher judgement as the intervention of professional expertise that takes into account the range of error involved in any test score and the assessment of effort and interest.

Grouping Policies, Practices, and Consequences

The three previous sections were supplemented by the inclusion of the following eight items regarding grouping policies, procedures, and consequences:

1. Homogeneous grouping for learning is the most effective way to provide specialized opportunities for slower learners.

2. The Board of Education has already covertly decided to change grouping practices radically but wants to ascribe the changes to recommendations made by Teachers College, Columbia University.

3. A major function of the schools is screening students for their appropriate place in life, e. g., college, industry, military.

4. The school should be concerned only with segregation in the classrooms.

5. As a result of grouping practices at the high school, only bright students get math and foreign languages.

6. In spite of the Board's policy against tracking in the secondary school, students are tracked into programs of study on the basis of intelligence and achievement test scores.

7. Extracurricular and informal student activities are racially segregated.

8. Teachers recently employed have reduced the effectiveness of current grouping practices.

Table 34 shows the agreement scores and the intensity of feeling for each of the items. The responses to items 2, 4, and 8 indicate a consistent disagreement regardless of level, experience, or race. Teachers do not feel that the Board of Education has already decided to change the present grouping practices, nor do they think teachers new to the system have reduced the effectiveness of the practices. There is also a consistently strong disagreement about being concerned only with segregation in the classroom. It would appear that concern for segregated activities in general is important to the staff of the Plainfield School System. In relation to this concern, student activities in the school system (Item 7) are viewed as integrated by all groupings of teachers with the exception of Black teachers who disagree. Facts could be gathered to resolve this difference of opinion.

A similar conflict of opinion is evident regarding the effectiveness of homogeneous grouping for slower learners and the effect of grouping practices on access to mathematics and foreign language programs in the high school (Items 1 and 5). Black staff members indicated that specialized opportunities for slower learners were not most effectively provided by grouping them homogeneously and that math and foreign language programs are limited to bright students as a result of the present high school grouping practices. In both of these areas there is difference of opinion between the Black staff members and the opinions of other groups. It should be pointed out that experienced teachers indicated strong agreement with the effectiveness of homogeneous grouping and that high school teachers disagreed strongly regarding student access to math and foreign language programs.

Closely allied to the above concern is Item 6 concerning tracking of students in the high school. The high school staff disagreed with this item, while all other groupings agreed. The strong agreement of Black respondents indicates a concern in this regard.

TABLE 34

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT, AND SALIENCY OF RESPONSES BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE, AND RACE
(Grouping Policy, Practices and Consequences)

	Organizational Level			Experience			Race - Experience			
	E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+
1. Homogeneous grouping for learning is the most effective way to provide specialized opportunities for slower learners	A	A	A	A	A	AS	D	A	A	AS
2. The Board of Education has already covertly decided to change grouping practices radically but wants to ascribe the changes to recommendations made by Teachers College, Columbia University	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
3. A major function of the schools is screening students for their appropriate place in life, e. g. college, industry, military	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	A
4. The school should be concerned only with segregation in the classrooms	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS
5. As a result of grouping practices in the high school, only bright students get math and foreign languages	D	D	DS	D	D	D	A	D	D	D
6. In spite of the Board's policy against tracking in the secondary school, students are tracked into programs of study on the basis of intelligence and achievement test scores	A	A	D	A	A	A	AS	A	A	A
7. Extracurricular and informal student activities are racially segregated	D	D	D	D	D	D	A	D	D	D
8. Teachers recently employed have reduced the effectiveness of current grouping practices.	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D

A - Agree
AS - Agree Salient
D - Disagree
DS - Disagree Salient

TABLE 35

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(Grouping Policies, Practices, and Consequences)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. Homogeneous grouping for learning is the most effective way to provide specialized opportunities for slower learners	L	L	M	O	H	M	M	H	H	H	H	H	M
2. The Board of Education has already covertly decided to change grouping practices radically but wants to ascribe the changes to recommendations made by Teachers College, Columbia University	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
3. A major function of the schools is screening students for their appropriate place in life e.g. college, industry, military	L	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	M	M
4. The school should be concerned only with segregation in the classrooms	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	L	O	O	O
5. As a result of grouping practices in the high school, only bright students get math and foreign languages	O	H	H	L	M	M	O	H	H	H	H	H	O
6. In spite of the Board's policy against tracking in the secondary school, students are tracked into programs of study on the basis of intelligence and achievement test scores	O	H	O	O	M	M	L	M	H	H	H	H	O
7. Extracurricular and informal student activities are racially segregated	L	O	M	O	M	M	M	M	H	H	H	H	M
8. Teachers recently employed have reduced the effectiveness of current grouping practices	O	O	O	L	L	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	L

O - No Significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

All of the respondents, with the exception of White teachers with ten or more years experience, indicated that screening students for their appropriate place in life was not a major function of schools.

Table 35 shows the intensity of differences between the opinions of groups for each item. Inspection of these findings reveals the strong differences of opinions concerning grouping practices and consequences (Items 1, 5, 6, and 7) that exist between Black staff members and White staff members. It should also be pointed out that on Items 1 and 7 the White teachers with less experience differ to moderate degree with the more experienced teacher. Their opinions are not as strong in regard to these items.

The evidence presented in this section indicates that opinions concerning grouping differ to some extent on the basis of level, experience and race. Most of the issues where there were strong feeling and large differences were related primarily to homogeneous grouping and its effects.

Grouping for Attendance

This section of the questionnaire included the following four items which relate to the attendance area grouping plan recommended by a study committee. The items included are:

1. The money currently spent on busing could be better spent on more beneficial educational programs.

2. The present school zoning and extensive grouping practices in the elementary schools create a feeling in most pupils that "they don't belong" as their schools and classmates are constantly changing.

3. Plainfield should abandon its current attendance area-busing program.

4. The recommendation of parallel strip attendance areas as made by the Wolff committee should be adopted.

Table 36 shows the agreement and disagreement on the above items. All of the groups of respondents agreed that youngsters in the elementary school do not have a feeling of belonging (Item 2) and that the money currently spent on busing could be better used for other purposes (Item 1). Opinions on Item 1 were salient for all categories of respondents other than junior high staff teachers with 1-3 years experience, and Black teachers who agreed, but not as strongly.

Changing the attendance area-busing program was supported by all of the groupings except Black staff members (Item 3). They apparently feel that this effort to provide for integration is important to maintain. Experienced teachers (10+ years) found this to be a salient issue, particularly the White group with 10 or more years experience.

The same two categories (10+ years experience, and White teachers with 10 or more years experience) disagreed with the recommendation to adopt parallel strip attendance areas (Item 4), while all other groupings agreed with this proposal, even though none of the group opinions were salient.

Table 37 reveals that differences between groups on Items 1 and 2 are differences in intensity, rather than differences of basic opinions. On item 3, regarding the abandonment of the present busing plan, teachers with 10 or more years experience agreed more strongly than less experienced staff members, with the Black respondents showing disagreement. The experience factor also operated in regard to opinions concerning item 4. Here again, the opinions of Black respondents differed, but not as intensely.

It would appear that attempts to provide for pupil integration are supported by the Black staff members and that experienced teachers feel more effective educational results could be achieved through better use of the available funds. The less experienced teachers appear to be between the two extremes in this regard.

Program of Study

The questionnaire included 10 items concerning the instructional program and its adequacy. Most of the items reflect comments made by teachers during the initial contacts with the system. The following items are considered in this section:

TABLE 36

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT AND SALIENCY OF RESPONSES
BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE AND RACE
(Grouping for Attendance)

	Organizational Level			Experience			Race		Experience	
	E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W1-9	W 10+
1. The money currently spent on busing could be better spent on more beneficial educational programs	AS	A	AS	A	AS	AS	A	AS	AS	AS
2. The present school zoning and extensive grouping practices in the elementary schools creates a feeling in most pupils that "they don't belong as their schools and classmates are constantly changing"	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
3. Plainfield should abandon its current attendance area-busing program	A	A	A	A	A	AS	D	A	A	AS
4. The recommendation of parallel strip attendance areas as made by the Wolfe committee should be adopted	A	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	A	D

A - Agree D - Disagree
AS - Agree Salient DS - Disagree Salient

TABLE 37

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(Grouping for Attendance)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. The money currently spent on busing could be better spent on more beneficial educational programs	M	O	L	M	H	O	L	M	H	M	O	H	M
2. The present school zoning and extensive grouping practices in the elementary schools creates a feeling in most pupils that "they don't belong as their schools and classmates are constantly changing"	O	O	O	O	L	O	O	O	O	O	L	-	M
3. Plainfield should abandon its current attendance area-busing program	H	O	M	M	H	O	L	H	H	H	M	H	M
4. The recommendation of parallel strip attendance areas as made by the Wolfe committee should be adopted	O	O	O	O	O	O	L	O	M	L	L	M	O

O - No Significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

1. CORE classes or inter-disciplinary studies should be developed to overcome the fragmentation of the curriculum.

2. The present secondary school curriculum is too restrictive and should be modified to include more electives, projects, one semester courses, and/or independent study.

3. The instructional program effectively relates to the environmental experiences of students.

4. The recent disorder can be attributed to the inadequacy of the school system to respond to the needs of the Black population.

5. The White students and the Black students should have distinctly different programs of study due to the difference in their past experience and probable future.

6. The current special studies course in Black history is a sufficient curriculum modification for meeting the needs of the Black students.

7. Music education in the public schools should be limited to the study and performance of music that is classical in nature.

8. Programs in vocational education planned for the new high school, when in operation, will meet the expectations of most parents with low incomes.

9. Physical education, intramurals and athletics should be further developed since such activities encourage boys to stay in school.

10. Receiving a diploma from Plainfield Schools should indicate that the student has successfully acquired certain substantive knowledge and acquired proficiency in the basic skills of literacy.

Basic to the concerns in all of the other items is the meaning attributed to receiving a high school diploma (Item 10). Consistent agreement with this item was expressed by all groups of respondents, with each group expressing strong opinion.

Consistent agreement was also found on Items 1, 2, and 9, which address issues concerning the adequacy of the present curriculum and proposed modifications. All respondents agreed, with no group expressing strong agreement, that the present secondary school curriculum is too restrictive and that modifications including electives, independent study, and inter-disciplinary studies should be developed, as well as to further develop the physical education program.

Disagreement was expressed constantly on Items 5, 6, and 7, with consistently strong opinions being exhibited on Items 5 and 7. It is very obvious that separate instructional programs for Black and White students are not desirable in the opinions of the respondents (Item 5), nor does the staff wish to limit music instruction to that which is considered classical (Item 7). The view of the adequacy of the special course in Black history as a sufficient curriculum modification for Black students found all groups disagreeing with the item as stated (Item 6) and the Black respondents expressing strong disagreement.

The adequacy of the vocational program to meet the expectations of low income parents received a mixed response. The elementary staff agreed that it would, but junior high and senior high staffs disagreed. Less experienced teachers (1-3 years and 4-9 years) disagreed and those with 10 or more years of experience agreed. Black respondents and White teachers with 1-9 years of experience disagreed with the item, while White teachers as a total group agreed. The White respondents with 10 years or more experience neither agreed nor disagreed with this item. It is interesting to note that the mixed feelings in regard to this item, although conflicting, are not strong in either direction which would suggest that it was not an important issue for any group.

The relevance of the instructional program to the environmental experiences of pupils is assessed by Item 3. The response indicates that elementary respondents and respondents with 10 or more years experience in the system felt that the program is relevant and all other respondents did not. Feelings were not strong on this item.

The elementary, junior high, Black, and teachers with 1-9 years experience groups agreed that the recent disorder reflected the inadequacy of the system to respond to the needs of the Black population. High school respondents, White respondents, and teachers with 10 or more years experience disagreed.

The level of disagreement between groups on the above Item 10 is high for all except the elementary-junior high and the 1-3 years experience - 4-9 years experience comparisons. The range of differences of opinions was large on this item even though only the Black respondents found it salient. Most of the other differences on items in this group are not nearly as extensive or as large. It would appear that the experienced teachers are more satisfied with the system and its response than other groups.

The Instructional Process

Since grouping is for the purpose of instruction, the following five items were used to seek out opinions concerning the instructional process. The items were:

1. Providing more time in class for directed study to replace some homework should be encouraged.

2. Students have too much school work to complete.

3. Classroom activity should focus primarily on the teacher's attempt to see if students have mastered the work assigned.

4. The current library resources and services are adequate to meet the needs of the instructional program.

5. Most classroom teachers correctly assume that students can read and reading skills should be a matter of concern only in special reading classes.

Table 39 shows the agreement scores and intensity of feeling for each of the items. Responses to Items 1 and 2 indicate a general agreement regardless of level, experience or race. The consensus of opinion throughout was that students do not have too much school work to complete. Furthermore teachers agreed that additional class time for directed study to replace some homework should be encouraged. This would indicate a general feeling that the work load for students was reasonable but needed more direction.

In the responses to Item 3, there is also consistent disagreement that the primary objective of the classroom teacher should be to determine the degree to which students have mastered the prescribed assignments.

TABLE 38

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(Program of Studies)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. CORE classes or inter-disciplinary studies should be developed to overcome the fragmentation of the curriculum	O	M	M	O	M	O	M	O	H	M	O	H	M
2. The present secondary school curriculum is too restrictive and should be modified to include more electives, projects, one-semester courses and/or independent study	L	O	O	O	M	O	L	O	M	L	O	M	M
3. The instructional program effectively relates to the environmental experiences of students	M	O	O	O	M	O	M	L	H	M	-	H	M
4. The recent disorder can be attributed to the inadequacy of the school system to respond to the needs of the Black population	O	H	H	O	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
5. The White students and the Black students should have distinctly different programs of study due to the difference in their past experience and probable future	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	L	L	L	L	L	O
6. The current special studies course in Black history is a sufficient curriculum modification for meeting the needs of Black students	O	O	M	O	M	M	H	L	H	H	H	H	L
7. Music education in the public schools should be limited to the study and performance of music that is classical in nature	O	L	L	O	O	O	O	O	L	O	O	L	L
8. Programs in vocational education planned for the new high school, when in operation, will meet the expectations of most parents with low incomes	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	L	L	O	O	O
9. Physical education, intramurals and athletics should be further developed since such activities encourage boys to stay in school	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. Receiving a diploma from Plainfield Schools should indicate that the student has successfully acquired certain substantive knowledge and acquired proficiency in the basic skills of literacy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

O - No significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

TABLE 39

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT AND SALIENCY OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE AND RACE

(Program of Studies)

	Organizational Level			Experience			Race		Experience	
	E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+
1. CORE classes or inter-disciplinary studies should be developed to overcome the fragmentation of the curriculum.	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
2. The present secondary school curriculum is too restrictive and should be modified to include more electives, projects, one-semester courses and/or independent study	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
3. The instructional program effectively relates to the environmental experiences of students	A	D	D	D	D	A	D	D	D	A
4. The recent disorder can be attributed to the inadequacy of the school system to respond to the needs of the Black population	A	A	D	A	A	D	AS	D	A	D
5. The White students and the Black students should have distinctly different programs of study due to the difference in their past experience and probable future	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS
6. The current special studies course in Black history is a sufficient curriculum modification for meeting the needs of Black students	D	D	D	D	D	D	DS	D	D	D
7. Music education in the public schools should be limited to the study and performance of music that is classical in nature.	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS
8. Programs in vocational education planned for the new high school, when in operation, will meet the expectations of most parents with low incomes	A	D	D	D	D	A	A	A	D	AD
9. Physical education, intramurals and athletics should be further developed since such activities encourage boys to stay in school	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
10. Receiving a diploma from Plainfield Schools should indicate that the student has successfully acquired certain substantive knowledge and acquired proficiency in the basic skills of literacy.	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS

A - Agree
AS - Agree Salient
D - Disagree
DS - Disagree Salient

In Item 5, there is consistently disagreement on all levels, regardless of longevity in teaching and/or ethnic background, as to limiting concern with reading skills and disabilities to special classes only. It is apparent that this is a general concern on all organizational levels and cannot be restricted to the area of specialized classes, with a singular concern for reading skills. Feeling was strongest on the elementary level, probably due to this group's feeling that reading is their primary focus in all areas of teaching.

As to Item 4, elementary and junior high people evidently view the library resources and services as adequate for their programs. However, the high school teachers, Black teachers and beginning teachers (those with 1-3 years of experience) disagreed as to the adequacy of library resources. Perhaps these groups are making greater demands on the library resources and services, and the Black teachers are looking for specialized materials which are not available.

Table 40 shows the intensity of differences between the opinions of groups for each item.

Item 4 indicates that more experienced teachers (White especially) felt the library resources were adequate, where the secondary people and people with less experience were more dissatisfied with the existing library resources. This does not indicate a dissatisfaction with the librarian or her services, but probably relates to the lack of specific materials and resources desired by these groups.

In Item 5 the most concerned group again is the elementary group of teachers. It is evident that they do not assume students can read and do feel that reading skills are incorporate in every facet of the instructional program. Among the secondary group, the degree of concern in this area becomes quite moderate.

Experienced (10+) Black teachers seemed to feel strongest regarding the amount of school work children have to complete. The degree of intensity indicates that the students do not have enough school work to complete.

Marking, Progress and Promotion

Grades received, progress in learning, and promotion from grade to grade in the system are all influenced to some degree by

TABLE 40

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(Instructional Process)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. Providing more time in class for directed study to replace some homework should be encouraged	O	O	O	H	L	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2. Students have too much school work to complete	O	O	O	O	M	O	M	O	H	O	L	O	O
3. Classroom activity should focus primarily on the teacher's attempt to see if students have mastered the work assigned	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
4. The current library resources and services are adequate to meet the needs of the instructional program	O	M	M	O	M	O	M	O	M	L	-	H	H
5. Most classroom teachers correctly assume that students can read and reading skills should be a matter of concern only in special reading classes	H	M	O	O	O	O	O	O	L	O	O	L	O

O - No Significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

TABLE 41

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT AND SALIENCY OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE AND RACE
(Instructional Process)

	Organization Level			Experience			Race		Experience	
	E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+
1. Providing more time in class for directed study to replace some homework should be encouraged	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
2. Students have too much school work to complete	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	D	DS	DS	DS
3. Classroom activity should focus primarily on the teacher's attempt to see if students have mastered the work assigned	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
4. The current library resources and services are adequate to meet the needs of the instructional program	A	A	D	D	A	A	D	A	A	AS
5. Most classroom teachers correctly assume that students can read and reading skills should be a matter of concern only in special reading classes	DS	D	D	D	D	DS	D	DS	D	DS

A - Agree
AS - Agree Salient
D - Disagree
DS - Disagree Salient

grouping procedures. The following six items reflect concerns in this general area:

1. Students in classes for slower learners should not be given high grades, since the content for these classes is substantially "watered down."

2. Teachers are frequently asked by the principal to change failing or low grades recorded for students.

3. Many youngsters enroll in school who are not really interested in learning.

4. Any student who is two years or more behind in reading at any grade level should be retained in that grade.

5. No student should be promoted who is more than one year below grade level in reading achievement.

6. Students who are not interested in successfully completing at least four academic courses each year in the high school should not consider going to college.

There is remarkable consistency of opinion as expressed by groups in relation to these items as shown in Table 42 . On Item 1 concerning grades, every group disagrees with the item as stated and only the elementary respondents and White teachers with 10 or more years of experience express opinions which are not salient.

Respondents in each grouping also disagree with Item 2 which states that teachers are frequently asked by the principal to change low or failing grades.

All of the groups, except the Black respondents, agreed with Item 3 which states that many youngsters in school are not interested in learning. The lack of saliency on this item is worthy of note.

The White teachers with 10 or more years of experience agreed that students two or more years behind grade level in reading should be retained, while all other groups disagreed with this item. Again we find no salient opinions in relation to this item.

When non-promotion was based on one or more years below grade level (Item 5) all groupings responded negatively. None of these responses were salient.

The final item concerning any student considering college who does not successfully complete four academic courses each year in the high school found all of the groups, except Black respondents, in agreement with this point of view.

As indicated above the differences between groups shown in Table 43 indicate that on Items 3 and 6 there is a Black-White difference and on the others there are differences in relation to level and experience.

Differences in this section reflect to some degree the differing instructional practices at each level, as well as teacher standards and perceptions of youngsters. All things considered, the general consistency would be a starting point for further staff study in these areas.

Internal Articulation

Provision for continuity in the student's educational program as he moves within the system was explored through opinions in relation to the following five items:

1. Coordination and articulation of the curriculum in the total school system is effective.
2. Provisions are made for the continuous progress of students, particularly at the elementary school level.
3. Students' academic problems identified at the high school level are usually the results of poor elementary school preparation.
4. Student folders, containing anecdotal records, marks and test scores, are used in such a way as to have harmful effects for many students.
5. Communication between teachers sending students to another school and teachers receiving students in that school is effective in providing continuity in the student's education.

TABLE 42

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT AND SALIENCY OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE AND RACE

(Marking, Progress and Promotion)

		Organizational Level			Experience			Race		Experience	
		E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+
1.	Students in classes for slower learners should not be given high grades, since the content for these classes is substantially "watered down."	D	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	DS	D
2.	Teachers are frequently asked by the principal to change failing or low grades recorded for students	DS	D	DS	DS	D	D	D	DS	DS	DS
3.	Many youngsters enroll in school who are not really interested in learning	A	A	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	A
4.	Any student who is two years or more behind in reading at any grade level should be retained in that grade	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	A
5.	No student should be promoted who is more than 1 year below grade level in reading achievement	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
6.	Students who are not interested in successfully completing at least 4 academic courses each year in the high school should not consider going to college	A	A	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	A

A - Agree
AS - Agree Salient
D - Disagree
DS - Disagree Salient

TABLE 43

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(Marking, Progress and Promotion)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. Students in classes for slower learners should not be given high grades, since the content for these classes is substantially "watered down."	H	H	O	O	M	O	O	O	L	O	O	L	M
2. Teachers are frequently asked by the principal to change failing or low grades recorded for students	M	O	M	L	H	L	O	O	O	L	M	L	O
3. Many youngsters enroll in school who are not really interested in learning	O	M	O	O	M	M	L	M	H	H	M	H	L
4. Any student who is two years or more behind in reading at any grade level should be retained in that grade	O	O	L	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	M	H
5. No student should be promoted who is more than 1 year below grade level in reading achievement	O	O	M	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
6. Students who are not interested in successfully completing at least 4 academic courses each year in the high school should not consider going to college	O	O	O	O	O	M	L	M	H	H	H	H	O

O - No Significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

General articulation of the curriculum on a system wide basis was the concern of Item 1. Table 44 reveals general disagreement with this item as stated, with the exception of White teachers with 10 or more years experience. This group, as well as all teachers with 10 or more years experience, agreed with Item 2, while all other categories disagreed. These two groupings, with the addition of elementary staff members, disagreed with Item 3 which stated that later academic problems are the result of poor elementary school preparation.

All groups disagreed with Items 4 and 5 concerning the misuse of student records and teacher communication between levels as being effective. The only strong opinions were those of high school staff members on Item 4.

The differences between groups as shown by Table 45 in regard to Items 1, 2, and 3 indicate more positive opinions by experienced teachers in regard to system coordination and continuous progress at the elementary level. They also form a coalition with the elementary teachers in disagreeing concerning the origin of academic problems at the elementary school level. Since there is a difference in direction as well as a difference in intensity of feelings on these three items, the difference between groups is not surprising. It is interesting to note that there is difference between less experienced teachers and experienced teachers on these items, as well as a Black group - long experience group difference. Since many of the Black teachers also fall into the less experienced categories, these results may be more closely related to experience than race.

Items 4 and 5 reveal differences in degree, rather than direction. The differences in Item 5 regarding articulation between levels is more closely related to groups at each system level, as would be expected.

Item 4 reveals a difference of intensity which is apparent in all three areas of comparison. The strong disagreement of high school staff members is not shared to the same degree by either junior high or elementary groups. It is also apparent that intensity gets stronger in relation to years of experience. In regard to race it is obvious that the White teachers disagree much more intensely than the Black respondents.

It would appear that there is general agreement among groups that articulation should be improved. When there is inconsistence, the more experienced teachers express more positive views toward the system and its policies than less experienced teachers, Black and White. This might reflect lack of orientation and in-service experiences and also the high turnover rate among staff members, or it might reflect a defensiveness on the part of more experienced teachers who may have more responsibility for what now exists. In any case, it appears that in the interest of providing for continuity of learning experiences, this area should be of concern to the system.

School - Community Relations

Authorities state and research evidence supports the contention that the effectiveness of the school program is improved through positive school-community relations. Evidence from the community survey reported elsewhere in this report support the significance of grouping procedures as a community concern. The internal opinions concerning school community relations are assessed on the bases of responses to the following 10 items.

1. Students' educational problems actually begin in the home.
2. Plainfield schools would be much more effective if parents would only insist that students attend regularly.
3. Teachers should work more closely with non-school study centers and tutorial programs.
4. The schools should have guidance personnel available in evenings to confer with working parents.
5. School personnel, especially teachers, should increase contacts with parents in non-school settings.
6. Plainfield schools have a reputation for excellence that will be lost if they implement many of the proposals being made by predominately Black organizations.
7. In general the demands of the Black population have been unreasonable.

TABLE 44

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT AND SALIENCY OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE AND RACE
(Internal Articulation)

	Organizational Level			Experience			Race		Experience	
	E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+
1. Coordination and articulation of the curriculum in the total school system is effective	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	A
2. Provisions are made for the continuous progress of students, particularly at the elementary school level	D	D	D	D	D	A	D	D	D	A
3. Students' academic problems identified at the high school level are usually the result of poor elementary school preparation	D	A	A	A	A	DS	A	A	A	D
4. Student folders, containing anecdotal records, marks and test scores, are used in such a way as to have harmful effects for many students	D	D	DS	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
5. Communication between teachers sending students to another school and teachers receiving students in that school is effective in providing continuity in the student's education	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D

A - Agree
AS - Agree Salient
D - Disagree
DS - Disagree Salient

TABLE 45

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(Interval Articulation)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. Coordination and articulation of the curriculum in the total school system is effective	L	L	O	O	O	O	L	O	L	L	O	H	H
2. Provisions are made for the continuous progress of students, particularly at the elementary school level	M	O	M	L	H	O	M	M	H	M	O	H	M
3. Students' academic problems identified at the high school level are usually the result of poor elementary school preparation	M	M	O	H	H	O	H	M	H	M	L	H	H
4. Student folders, containing anecdotal records, marks and test scores, are used in such a way as to have harmful effects for many students	O	H	H	L	H	H	L	H	H	H	H	H	O
5. Communication between teachers sending students to another school and teachers receiving students in that school is effective in providing continuity in the student's education	H	O	M	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

O - No Significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

8. Many students begin to use drugs before they enter junior high school.

9. Classroom behavior indicates that within the past several years the percentage of students who are emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted has increased significantly.

10. The health services provided for students by the Plainfield schools are woefully inadequate in terms of the needs of students.

The staff's perception of the influence of the home on educational problems is evidenced by the responses to item 1. Every group agreed that educational problems begin in the home, with all groupings except Black teachers agreeing strongly. Recognizing the significance of the out-of-school influences,it is logical to find agreement with Items 3, 4, and 5 which suggest additional contact between school-community personnel both in school and in non-school settings. Many groups express strong agreement with these items.

Item 4 regarding parental insistence on regular pupil attendance was agreed to by all groups, except Black teachers. High school teachers and teachers with ten or more years experience felt strongly about this item. It would appear that the Black do not feel that attendance is important. However, interviews revealed that Black teachers felt absence was a result of the problem, not a problem in and of itself. The problem as they see it is the inappropriate experience provided by the school for Black pupils.

All groups agreed that the percentage of emotionally disturbed and socially maladjusted children had increased in the past several years, with most groups expressing strong agreement.

Items 7 and 8 relate to student use of drugs and the adequacy of school health services. Both of these items resulted in conflicting opinions among groups. The high school staff members and the Black staff members agreed that many students begin to use drugs before they enter junior high school. All other groups disagreed with this item. It should be pointed out that the drug problem in the high school was cited on the questionnaire and during interviews with teachers. The school health services (Item 10) were judged as being adequate by the junior high teachers, White teachers, and the teachers with 10 or more years experience. Elementary teachers, high school teachers, Black teachers, and teachers with 1-3 and 4-9 years

years experience agreed that the services were inadequate.

The demands being made upon the system and the possible consequences of implementing the proposals are assessed in Item 6 and 7. The opinions concerning the potential damage to the reputation of the system reflect the concern of high school, and White teachers with ten or more years experience. The other group opinions did not agree that implementing the proposals would be damaging. Again, as would be expected, the Black respondents expressed strong opinions on this item. Item 7, regarding the demands of the Black population as being unreasonable found opinions being distributed in exactly the same fashion as those on Item 6.

The differences between the opinions of groups on all of the items in this section with the exception of Item 8, reflect a picture of Black respondents and teachers in the 1-3 and 4-9 years of experience categories again not expressing the same opinions to some Items (6, 7, 10) or strong opinions on other Items (2, 4, 9) as the more experienced teachers in the system.

The opinions indicate the pervasive desire to establish effective school-community relations. However, the concerns and responses to proposed procedures do not achieve the same general support from all groups. The results suggest that the motivation is present and that with effort, viable procedures could be developed by the system.

Professional Roles, Decision-Making and In-Service Education

In-service education is readily identifiable as a major area of concern for any school staff. The following 10 items from the questionnaire deal with this concern as well as the related areas of decision-making and the role of the professional in the school system:

1. Teachers are encouraged to develop innovative instructional practices.

2. In Plainfield the school principal has wide latitude for discretionary action, thus leadership at the building level is encouraged.

TABLE 46

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT, AND SALIENCY OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE AND RACE
(School-Community Relations)

	Organizational Level			Experience			Race		Experience	
	E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+
1. Students' educational problems actually begin in the home	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	A	AS	AS	AS
2. Plainfield schools would be much more effective if parents would only insist that students attend regularly	A	A	AS	A	A	AS	D	A	A	A
3. Teachers should work more closely with non-school study centers and tutorial programs	A	A	A	A	A	A	AS	A	AS	A
4. The schools should have guidance personnel available in evenings to confer with working parents	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS
5. School personnel, especially teachers, should increase contacts with parents in non-school settings	A	AS	A	A	A	A	AS	A	A	A
6. Plainfield schools have a reputation for excellence that will be lost if they implement many of the proposals being made by predominantly Black organizations	D	D	A	D	D	A	DS	A	D	A
7. In general the demands of the Black population have been unreasonable	D	D	A	D	D	A	DS	A	D	A
8. Many students begin to use drugs before they enter junior high school	D	D	A	D	D	D	A	D	D	D
9. Classroom behavior indicates that within the past several years the percentage of students who are emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted has increased significantly	AS	AS	AS	A	AS	AS	A	AS	A	AS
10. The health services provided for students by the Plainfield schools are woefully inadequate in terms of the needs of students	A	D	A	A	A	D	A	D	A	D

A - Agree
AS - Agree Salient
D - Disagree
DS - Disagree Salient

TABLE 47

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(School - Community Relations)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. Students' educational problems actually begin in the home	O	O	O	L	L	O	O	M	M	L	O	L	O
2. Plainfield schools would be much more effective if parents would only insist that students attend regularly	O	H	H	L	H	M	L	H	H	H	M	O	M
3. Teachers should work more closely with non-school study centers and tutorial programs	O	O	O	O	O	L	O	L	M	M	O	M	H
4. The schools should have guidance personnel available in evenings to confer with working parents	O	L	O	O	L	O	O	O	M	M	O	M	L
5. School personnel, especially teachers, should increase contacts with parents in non-school settings	M	O	M	O	M	L	M	M	H	H	M	H	M
6. Plainfield schools have a reputation for excellence that will be lost if they implement many of the proposals being made by predominantly Black organizations	L	M	O	O	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
7. In general the demands of the Black population have been unreasonable	O	L	M	O	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
8. Many students begin to use drugs before they enter junior high school	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
9. Classroom behavior indicates that within the past several years the percentage of students who are emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted has increased significantly	O	O	O	L	H	O	L	L	H	M	M	H	H
10. The health services provided for students by the Plainfield schools are woefully inadequate in terms of the needs of students	O	O	H	L	L	O	M	O	M	L	O	M	L

O - No Significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

3. The current in-service education program for staff meets the professional needs of teachers.

4. Curriculum change is public relations oriented with most changes on paper, but not in the classrooms.

5. In making curriculum decisions, the school system should give greater recognition to the specialized competency of high school subject matter teachers.

6. Faculty members who will teach in the new high school were directly involved in planning the educational program for that building.

7. When faculty committees are appointed they seldom know what they are supposed to do.

8. Time and other resources necessary for planning and implementing instructional innovations are generally provided.

9. Recommendations made by faculty committees are seldom acted upon.

10. Teachers derive personal and professional satisfaction from serving on faculty committees.

In order to be responsive to the changing demands being made upon schools in any environment, it has been established that purposeful change must occur. Even though the literature and research on the process of change is far from definitive, several basic principles have emerged as being important in relation to enhancing the prospect for successful changes taking place. Among these are such factors as the involvement and support of those affected by the change, effective leadership, and action on suggestions made by participants.

Opinion on Item 1 as shown in Table 48 indicates that all groups considered in this analysis agree that teachers are encouraged to innovate. The elementary group and the groups with 10 or more years of experience agree strongly with this item.

Items 4 and 5 deal with curriculum decisions. All groups agreed (Item 4) that curriculum changes are more apparent than real,

TABLE 48

AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT, AND SALIENCY OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL, EXPERIENCE AND RACE
(Professional Roles, Decision-Making and In-Service Education)

	Organizational Level			Experience			Race		Experience	
	E	J	H	1-3	4-9	10+	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+
1. Teachers ar encouraged to develop innovative instructional practices	AS	A	A	A	A	AS	A	A	A	AS
2. In Plainfield the school principal has wide latitude for discretionary action, thus leadership at the building level is encouraged	A	A	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
3. The current in-service education program for staff meets the professional needs of teachers	D	DS	DS	DS	DS	D	DS	DS	DS	D
4. Curriculum change in public relations oriented with most changes on paper, but not in the classrooms	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
5. In making curriculum decisions, the school system should give greater recognition to the specialized competency of high school subject matter teachers	A	A	AS	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
6. Faculty members who will teach in the new high school were directly involved in planning the educational program for that building	A	D	D	D	D	A	D	D	D	D
7. When faculty committees are appointed they seldom know what they are supposed to do	D	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	D	D
8. Time and other resources necessary for planning and implementing instructional innovations are generally provided	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	A
9. Recommendations made by faculty committees are seldom acted upon	A	A	AS	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
10. Teachers derive personal and professional satisfaction from serving on faculty committees	D	D	D	D	D	A	D	D	D	

A - Agree
AS - Agree Salient
D - Disagree
DS - Disagree Salient

if judgment is based on what happens in the classroom. There was also general agreement that the competencies of high school subject matter teachers should be used when curriculum decisions are made (Item 5). As would be expected the high school respondents felt strongly about this item.

Since committee action is a pervasive operational procedure in school systems Items 7, 9 and 10 ask for opinions in this area. The results on Item 10, which indicate that only experienced teachers derive satisfaction from serving on committees, are probably closely associated with the findings on the other two items. All of the groups agreed that recommendations made by faculty committees are seldom acted upon, with particularly strong feelings at the high school level (Item 9). There were mixed opinions concerning the clarity of purpose for committees (Item 7). Here again, more groups agreed than disagreed with this item. It would appear that the staff does not view school committee action as a very effective procedure for initiating change.

The response to Item 8 concerning time and resources for planning and innovating indicated that with the exception of White experienced respondents, there was a feeling of inadequate time.

Building leadership being encouraged also received a mixed reaction. The elementary and junior high respondents felt that it was, while the high school staff disagreed. All other groups of respondents either disagreed or were neutral.

A particular example of teacher involvement was investigated through Item 6 which concerned the planning for the new school facilities. The elementary and experienced teachers were of the opinion that the teachers affected were involved, while all other groups disagreed.

The adequacy of current in-service programs was seen as having much to be desired by all of the groups of respondents. With the exception of groups with 10 or more years experience, and the elementary staff, all other groups exhibited salient feelings on the item.

An analysis of Table 49 reveals that differences between groups in relation to these items are mostly differences in degree rather than point of view. Again it would appear that more experienced staff members have a more positive feeling toward the items in this section than other groups.

The total picture revealed by this section is hardly favorable. Even though the staff agreed that innovation is encouraged, the general

TABLE 49

EXTENT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN RESPONDENT GROUPS
(Professional Roles, Decision -Making and In-Service Education)

	E	E	J	1-3	1-3	1-3	4-9	4-9	10+	B	B	B	W 1-9
	J	S	S	4-9	10+	B	10+	B	B	W	W 1-9	W 10+	W 10+
1. Teachers are encouraged to develop innovative instructional practices	L	M	O	M	L	O	L	O	O	O	L	H	H
2. In Plainfield the school principal has wide latitude for discretionary action, thus leadership at the building level is encouraged	O	O	O	O	O	O	L	L	O	O	L	O	L
3. The current in-service education program for staff meets the professional needs of teachers	M	O	M	O	M	O	M	O	H	L	O	H	M
4. Curriculum change is public relations oriented with most changes on paper, but not in the classrooms	O	L	M	O	L	L	O	M	H	H	H	H	O
5. In making curriculum decisions, the school system should give greater recognition to the specialized competency of high school subject matter teachers	M	M	H	O	O	M	O	O	M	M	M	M	O
6. Faculty members who will teach in the new high school were directly involved in planning the educational program for that building	O	M	M	O	O	M	L	O	M	L	O	L	O
7. When faculty committees are appointed they seldom know what they are supposed to do	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	H	O	H
8. Time and other resources necessary for planning and implementing instructional innovations are generally provided	O	L	L	O	M	O	M	O	L	O	O	H	H
9. Recommendations made by faculty committees are seldom acted upon	O	L	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	L
10. Teachers derive personal and professional satisfaction from serving on faculty committees	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	H

O - No Significant Difference
L - Low Difference
M - Moderate Difference
H - High Difference

picture concerning leadership, administrative support, in-service education, and effectiveness of teacher participation is negative. A review of related policies and procedures would appear imperative. It is appropriate to add that this conclusion is verified by the responses to open ended questions on the questionnaire and through the interviews which were held.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the School System

The final page of the questionnaire stated:

> On this page please write as frankly as possible a short paragraph telling us what you believe to be the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the Plainfield Public School System. If possible, make suggestions about what should be done about these problems.

Most of the staff chose to respond to this request by stating what they considered to be the strengths and weaknesses. The following summary points out those factors which were mentioned often enough to be considered of concern to more than just a few people. The items reflect frequency of appearance and do not reflect value judgments in any way.

The factor most often listed as a strength of the system was the grouping policy. Many staff members commented on the ability grouping procedure's provision for meeting the needs of individual students at all levels and the benefits the students derive from not having to compete unsuccessfully.

The other factor identified by a large number as being a strength of the system was the "capable, well informed, conscientious faculty." The comments in this regard consistently refer to the well qualified staff and to the fact that the teachers are dedicated to the welfare and best interests of the students. The staff sees itself as being devoted to providing the best educational program possible for all students.

Beyond the two strengths discussed above, there were no particular strengths identified by large numbers of respondents. Other factors such as the department chairmen, the general curriculum and electives, the innovative spirit, extra curricular activities, the reputation of the schools, the equipment and facilities available, and the guidance program were mentioned as strengths often enough to be identified as more than passing observations.

The only weakness which was cited as often as the strengths of grouping and the teaching staff was the lack of leadership and direction. Such as comments "we lack leadership to direct a forward movement," "lack of strong leadership...difficult to chart a firm course..."are typical of many others which were made. The system's willingness to "acquiesce" to the demands of a vocal minority, its inability to make firm decisions, and its lack of responsiveness to the opinions of the professional staff were also cited.

Other weaknesses cited included lack of flexibility in the school system, an unresponsive teaching staff, the grouping procedures, the busing plan, the lack of specialists, students lack of respect for teachers, absenteeism, the exodus of educated White citizens, lack of curriculum coordination, and minority group dissatisfaction.

The only other weakness which was mentioned often enough to merit special consideration was the breakdown of discipline. Typical of the many comments in this respect was "lack of sensible rules firmly and impartially enforced." The inability of the system to provide an orderly environment for learning through strict enforcement of regulations regarding student behavior was also mentioned in one way or another.

Very few solutions, other than strict enforcement of rules, were mentioned, but several staff members volunteered to be interviewed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

> "We are seeking solutions that no one else
> has discovered, either."

It seems most appropriate in this final section of conclusions and recommendations to open with a statement of a member of the high school staff. We do not assume that we have identified problems that were unknown to the members of the staff of the Plainfield Public Schools. Neither do we assume that we or any other group have the answers to the profound problems apparent in Plainfield, but certainly not unique to Plainfield. We do hope that in delineating the direction and intensity of staff opinion as it relates to specific sectors of the professional staff, we have provided a description that makes responsible direction possible.

Given the nature of the times - the best of times, and the worst of times - Plainfield is in a very fortunate position. With a committed staff and a new high school building program well underway, the city has an opportunity to rethink even now its educational program. In so doing, the community will not only serve the students and other citizens of Plainfield but shall also continue its long tradition as a pace-setter in public education. We strongly believe that the staff has a reservoir of creative ideas. In fact, most of the recommendations included in this section were not thought of by the survey team but rather were dreamed by some people in Plainfield. We simply endorse them as sound and viable possibilities.

We did find, however, that one specific remark written by a staff member tended to summarize a rather prevalent point of view: "The discipline problem is terrible. The administration doesn't want to do anything about anything. The students get away with murder and nothing is done to them. As far as the education goes, it is just as good as it was years ago when Plainfield was considered one of the best in the country. The students are the ones who are inferior."

In interviews with the staff, it appeared that there were two basically different points of view concerning the nature of public education. On the one hand, there were staff members who clearly thought that the central fact to be taken into account when designing educational programs was the general characteristics of the student body and their families. In this case, the school is a social agency responsible not only to the taxpayers in general, but more importantly to the people who by choice or by the necessities of their financial situation depend upon the public schools for equality of educational opportunities, in the firm belief that schooling is effective in promoting a better way of life.

On the other hand, there were staff members who believed that school is by definition a specialized institution that provides a special kind of service. This service is provided for all those who enroll. To be effective, students must accept school as it is and perform according to its requirements. Those students who are unable or unwilling to behave as the school requires are to be isolated within the school or excluded entirely.

These two different points of view with respect to the high school have existed in America for many years. The Committee of Ten, chaired by Charles Eliot of Harvard, presented in 1894 the first major statement reflecting the latter point of view, while the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, chaired by

Charles Kingsley, presented the most significant early statement of the former point of view in 1918, in a report commonly referred to as the Cardinal Principles of Education.

The differences in point of view are likely to continue for some time. Indeed, the divergency of opinion on professional matters is a healthy condition for American education in general and for the Plainfield Public Schools in particular. In the past, when schools functioned as selective institutions and the student population was generally more homogeneous, the social consequences of the discussion were somewhat less visible and a great deal more acceptable to major segments of the population.

Under normal circumstances differences in opinion would basically reflect the structural characteristics of the system: whether the staff member associated with the elementary school, the junior high school or the senior high school. A second basis of difference would be the number of years in the school system. Other variables that one would expect to account for differences would be years of formal educational training and sex of the respondent, with younger men being somewhat different in their opinions from the older women who were hired during the war years.

In Plainfield these differences are accentuated by and even subordinated by racial distinctions, primarily because Blacks are not dispersed equally among structural units nor among experience categories. This means that those normal factors cannot operate in accounting for differences of opinion, since they do not in fact exist for the Blacks.

Where normally expected factors contribute to differences, they operate for the Whites. It is clear in the data that young White teachers who have experiences in the system comparable to that of the Black tend to agree with the Blacks, while those of the older Whites who are assigned to the high school tend to disagree most.

If foreward motion is to be made, these sharp differences of opinion among staff members must be dealt with. It seems there are four promising possibilities: (1) extensive and clearly focused in-service education opportunities for staff; (2) direct structural and procedural changes that provide new bases and situations for teacher-student interaction; (3) increased communication among staff members with emphasis upon inclusion of younger staff members in decision making; and (4) further development of school-community contacts to include more staff members.

In-Service Programs

The general dissatisfaction as expressed by respondents concerning the effectiveness of the present in-service educational programs in the school system leads to the conclusion that needs are present which are not being met. This survey of staff opinions provides many insights and concerns which may provide the substance for in-service experiences which may help to clear up matters which are factual and also develop a dialogue between persons and groups whose opinions differ.

Since many of the differences between groups are based on organizational levels, it would be important to plan experiences which would include staff members from all of the levels in the system. Many of the concerns, such as articulation and use of pupil personnel records, would be of interest to all teachers. It would also seem appropriate, in relation to the opinions expressed concerning the instructional program, to provide for system-wide curriculum studies.

The provision for modifying the instructional program to make it more responsive to the needs of pupils would also appear to be a possible area for emphasis, based upon the opinions of the staff. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the present program may give all of the persons in the system a more rational basis for their opinions.

The frequent differences of opinion between less experienced teachers and experienced staff members must also be recognized and dealt with. An induction and orientation program to help teachers new to the system to become acquainted with the school system and the community, if not already in effect, would appear to be desirable. As a part of this experience, it would be desirable to initiate contacts between teachers new to the system and experienced staff members. These exchanges of views and information should be encouraged in a systematic fashion.

The Black-White differences are also obvious and require systematic attention. The areas of mutual concern, such as the lack of program flexibility and the need for curricular modification, provide a starting point upon which to build. Much of the lack of responsiveness may be more closely related to inadequacy of knowledge than to absence of concern. The provision for in-service programs concerning Black studies programs, the Black experience, the Black history may help the staff become not only more sensitive to the problem, but also more capable of responding in a more adequate fashion. The evidence available indicates that the Black staff members are anxious to make the system, as presently organized, work for Black and for White students. Provisions which will enhance the ability of all staff members to help make the system respond would satisfy the concerns of both groups.

It is clear from the opinions expressed that in order to make any program involving teacher participation work, leadership which the staff recognizes as being effective must be provided. Encouragement, support, and the allocation of time and resources is also important in the opinion of the staff. Meaningful participation of the persons involved at every stage of the program is also seen as being important. And last, but not least, suggestions which result from faculty involvement should be acted upon. The integrity of the system and its ability to provide for individual satisfaction as well as organizational goals is being questioned seriously by a large number of the staff members of the system. Only through direct, sincere action with administrative direction and support will the system be able to move forward with the support of the staff, the students and the community.

Changing attitudes is difficult, at best, but recognizing them as being negatively detrimental, and operating in an inappropriate fashion is indefensible.

New Situations for Student-Teacher Interaction

In-service education as a procedure to generate new ideas and to provide a supportive context for the development of approaches to education is first of all something of a long term strategy. Even more important, in-service education is predicated upon the assumption that people are primarily rational and that information and behavior are in some way related. What such an approach ignores is the fact that behavior is in large part effected by the structure in which one exists. Behavior can change and will change if the structure, involving time-space-personnel allocations, are changed so that new behavior is both encouraged and expected.

In this respect, the structural changes contemplated or implemented should focus upon the context provided for student-student, student-staff and teacher-teacher interaction under new circumstances. We are convinced that first, the high school staff is deeply committed to the current grouping system and second that the policy *per se* is not the major source of conflict. It must be pointed out that the current organization of studies is such that many courses do proceed in a logical sequence and that this sequence - French I then French II - represent the current organization of subject matter. Thus, modifying the grouping procedures while leaving the program of studies intact would represent a rather limited modification. We were not asked to study the program of studies in terms of the content or the instructional activities in which students and teachers engage. We are not able, therefore, to discuss the substantive nature of courses. We are able to discuss aspects of organization that provide the framework for the instructional program.

We have pointed out that in the grouping of students for instruction, verbal ability is the primary factor taken into account. Ability grouping, on the basis of verbal ability and the other factors enumerated earlier, represents the horizontal organization of the school. It must be remembered that students are also organized along a vertical axis; namely, by chronological age into grades. This means that students of a given age have a rather limited contact with students who are different with respect to age and academic ability. The more perfectly the graded, ability grouping system works, the more narrow is the range of contacts by students. This structure, as was pointed out, leaves contacts on a non-academic basis to form within the peer culture, outside the classroom, and essentially along the lines of location of residency.

The schools have assumed that grouping of students on non-academic bases occurs in the extra-curricular activities. These activities do not function, in most schools, as well as anticipated for several reasons: (1) students work and cannot afford the after-school time; (2) skills necessary for acceptable performance are neither equally distributed nor encouraged for all students; (3) the extension of academic concerns is the area of interest to the organizations; and (4) the low status generally afforded these activities both by students and by faculty in this day of social concern and activitism. We believe, therefore, that new situations for interaction by students, teachers and competent laymen must be designed by the school system. In effect, we recognize that ability grouping in some areas of the school program is necessary for some instructional purposes, but for the welfare of the students and for the overall effectiveness of the program other groupings for other purposes need to be developed by the school.

There are programs of study in which the current structure and sequence of courses is neither logically nor instructionally necessary. At the elementary school level, the concept of continuous growth and progress of students should receive continued and increased emphasis. It may well be that the non-graded approach to learning provides a useful context within which to extend the effort to individualize learning.

Given the emphasis teachers necessarily place on the ability to read and the developmental nature of reading ability, the English program in the secondary schools could be non-graded so that chronological age was not a primary basis for grouping. The program could be organized, in terms of content, materials, and activities, so as to focus on the development of reading skills and communication skills based upon drama and film as well as upon books. It appears from teacher comments, although we were not asked to study the area in depth, that the overall language arts program lacks coordination and rests upon the assignment of books to various grade levels. Student groupings in the new context might more nearly reflect student needs and specialized activities designed to meet those needs.

Third, the social studies program, with direct responsibility to study social problems and the functioning of society, might assign first priority to considering the re-sequencing of courses. The course on problems of democracy that usually is composed of seniors comes at a time in the program that makes its direct relevence to the problems of urbanism, poverty and race relations less than functional for the senior high school as a micro-community. If the problems of democracy course were offered to sophomores in heterogeneously grouped classes, students might have a better arena in which to discuss intellectually the problems of their time.

It is also possible to design new types of courses that take greater advantage of the specialized competencies of staff members and of laymen and at the same time provide different bases upon which instructors and students group themselves for educational purposes. We call this new type of course a "mini-course." These courses need not be scheduled for an entire school year nor even for a full semester. Academic credit need not be assigned to the courses, although an indication of attendance on the students' records might be useful. Also, the courses would focus on student discussion and would be more informal than many regular classes. The following list includes some of the activities organized by students, teachers and laymen of a high school in another state. They are offered as illustrative examples:

Existentialism
White Racism
Museum Techniques
Physical Anthropology
The American Indian in the Ghetto
Pursuit of Truth through Logic
Thoreau's Civil Disobedience
Social Psychology
The "Honest to God" Debate
Black Ghetto/White Ghetto
Biafra: An American Dilemma
The Draft
Ecstasy in Education: *A Discussion*
Sign Language
How to Win at Poker Without Cheating
Cryptanalysis
Number Mysticism
Protein Chemistry
The Laser
Astronomy
Airplane Navigation
Real Estate Theory and Practice
Hippie Poster Art
Psychedelic Sculpture and "Light Show" Experimenting
Israeli Folk Dancing
Guerilla Theatre
Electronic Music
History and Practice of Blues
Film-Making as Individual Expression
Lord of the Rings and New Fantasy
Milton's *Areopagitica*
The Adventures of a Young Man: A Hemingway Seminar
Comics as an Outgrowth of American Culture
The Black Identity: Modern Afro -American Poetry
War Strategy
The Growth of Black Militancy in America
Fencing
Yoga

It is important in our mind that both teachers and students be afforded an opportunity to initiate ideas for mini-courses. Thus, an individual teacher or a competent layman could announce the topic for an intended course and invite students to participate. Likewise, students could present a topic and either invite a specific adult to serve as sponsor or discussion leader or could ask for volunteers or recommendations. Participating staff members should, in our opinion, be compensated in some way for their time and effort. Space and time during the regular school day should be provided for these mini-courses so that more students have an opportunity to participate. We recognize that scheduling might be difficult and that space is limited. Students, however, are in study halls and it is possible that space might be provided in the nearby public library or similar facilities.

Priority should be given to those mini-courses that originate with, or after establishment include, a heterogeneous student population. Those mini-courses that function well might later be converted into units of instruction for inclusion in the regular curriculum or be created into semester long minor subjects to be offered with academic credit. These courses should be organized immediately to alleviate some of the stratification among the students and faculty.

In terms of restructuring, the new high school physical plant provides an exceptional opportunity. To counterbalance some of the undesirable consequences of a grouping system, whatever it may be, the staff, students and community should give serious consideration to the school-within-a-school or house plan as a way of creating smaller units for administrative, guidance, co-curricular and instructional activities in the new high school. Such an organization requires very careful planning. This planning should involve staff, students and parents at appropriate points and should be fully supported by the system to the extent of providing time, study materials, field visits to operational programs and consultants with useful expertise. A task force, for which the participating staff members would be compensated, should be created to function during and after the summer months. Needless to say, the task force should be composed of staff from different races and levels of experience.

The same support should be given to activities created to construct a new schedule for the high school so that teachers have an opportunity to design new types of educational experiences.

We would like to point out that the opportunity to re-design aspects of secondary education for the new high school is a difficult and time consuming task. We have suggested that support be provided for participating staff members. We would go even further to suggest that administrative time for coordinating activities is a high priority item. Staff members commented about the lack of administrative leadership in some situations. If administrative leadership is ever needed, it certainly shall be needed as the staff attempts to continue development of plans for the new high school. It may well be that a new position should be created with responsibility only for curriculum and instruction in the high school. This in no way should be viewed as an evaluation of the present personnel. It simply recognizes the complexity of the task which is sure to become even more so, as the opening date draws nearer.

Increased Communications

The data show that most staff members are uninformed about the schools, their programs and their possibilities. When valid and reliable information is not available, inaccurate information is accepted as fact and becomes the basis for discussion and action.

Just as we assume that students can learn effectively from the printed page, we also assume that written materials prepared primarily if not exclusively for staff use would be helpful. At the moment, many staff members believe that they learn most about the system either by living long enough in the system or by listening to the local radio station. We do not disparage the use of radio time or question its effectiveness, but neither radio nor longevity is a substitute for printed materials. Even more important than printed materials, which give but do not exchange information, are face-to-face contacts.

In Plainfield the attendance area - busing plan tends to decentralize and disperse people and programs in such a way as to increase the need for internal communication, while at the same time making it more difficult. In the situation information apparently flows to and from the Board of Education and its executive officer, the Superintendent. Information flows less easily among staff members in the various schools, especially for the newer teachers who do not know many of their colleagues in other buildings and therefore have limited ability to discuss professional concerns with them through situations provided by the school system.

With the rather complex organizational structure and the high annual teacher turnover, the problem is further exacerbated by the policy that provides for a great degree of autonomy at the building level. Autonomy creates a context for creative leadership, but as with freedom in the larger society, autonomy creates problems of coordination. We believe that autonomy gains meaning within a coordinated structure. Furthermore, we believe that the staff of Plainfield is desirous of grasping more firmly an intellectual sense of direction.

While we do not recommend the proliferation of meetings and groups for their own sake, we do think that many meetings currently composed of staff members only from a single building could be modified so as to include staff from several buildings. We are not referring to the more ambitious task force groups suggested earlier, but rather to task oriented groups that consider less complex problems. The professional concerns of staff among the buildings is very similar, but some have developed more creative responses than others. The inclusion of staff from several buildings and from several levels of experience might well provide each person with a somewhat different perspective on the nature of the problem situation and would thereby make it possible for them to develop additional viable options as solutions. Inter-school groups might, after a few early meetings, disband to become building level sub-groups.

Further Development of School Community Contacts to Include More Staff Members

The image of the "little red schoolhouse" endures for many Americans because their knowledge of schools goes little beyong their own experience as students. For those people who have not enrolled in a secondary school at all or who have attended a school quite different from the complex schools of Plainfield, comprehending a school -- its plans and its program -- is a very difficult matter.

For a parent, knowledge about a school seems to be the basis upon which one would build an understanding of the meaning of the present educational program for pupils. One of the possible ways to help parents to become more knowledgeable about the schools, and to help school personnel to become more sensitive to the community is through more frequent contact in school and non-school settings.

One section of the questionnaire, not previously discussed, posed the following means for improving the relations between the schools and the parents in Plainfield:

1. A stronger PTA with more frequent meetings,
2. More open school or open house evenings at school,
3. More school-community coordinators,
4. Guidance counselors available in the evening,
5. Parent-educator groups formed to work together on educational problems and advise the Board of Education,
6. Scheduled individual parent-teacher meetings at the school,
7. Regular home visits with parents by teachers,
8. Improved printed material and announcements from the school.

Each respondent was asked to check either "Very Helpful," "Somewhat Helpful" or "Not Helpful" for each of the suggestions. The responses indicated that having guidance counselors available in the evening would be the most effective. The provision for more school community coordinators and parent- educator groups were close behind the first choice. Following the above three was parent-teacher meetings at the school. These four suggestions were seen as helpful or somewhat helpful by over 90 per cent of the respondents.

Over 70 per cent of the respondents felt that home visits by teachers and improved written materials from the school would be helpful. Only the suggestions regarding a stronger PTA and more open-school evenings received less than a 70 per cent response in the "helpful" categories. All of the items were viewed as helpful procedures by a majority of respondents.

The above results indicate an interest and willingness on the part of the staff in developing procedures to improve relations with the parents and the community at large. A starting point might be the initiation of study groups for parents to become more knowledgeable about school system operation and decision-making. At the same time staff groups, particularly for those personnel who are relatively new to the system, could become more familiar with the Plainfield community and other youth serving agencies. This would be a base upon which to develop further experiences by people who have had some common knowledge and understanding about school and community relations.

In regard to the positive response to the idea of providing guidance counselors for conferences in the evening, it is our belief that this is a definite step in the proper direction, but not an adequate response to present needs in and of itself. The teaching staff in general, as well as specialized personnel, should have more opportunities to interact with parents and others in the community in school and especially non-school settings. The study groups suggested above, of which the task forces recommended for the high school are specific examples, should schedule some meetings in non-school settings.

Teachers should make time available during other than regularly scheduled hours to meet with parents, especially those who work.

CHAPTER V

STUDENT ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS REGARDING GROUPING PROCEDURES AND RELATED PRACTICES

Introduction

The students in the Plainfield schools are the direct beneficiaries of the strengths or weaknesses of existing grouping practices. When this study was formulated, it appeared highly appropriate to obtain a preliminary reading of student attitudes towards these grouping policies. This report describes the outcomes of a series of interviews with groups of Plainfield students. Some of the questions that formed the basis of the interviews are indicated below. These types of questions served to give some direction to the interviews, but the interviews were largely unstructured and the pupils contributed a large variety of opinions about the larger spectrum of school life.

1. What do you understand the purposes of ability grouping to be?

2. Why do you think you were placed in your particular group? What determines the group a student is placed in?

3. What effect does ability grouping have on the academic standing of students? On their extracurricular life? On their social life in or out of school?

4. Do you have any impressions about the students in the different groups?

5. What do students in the different groups think about themselves?

6. Do you feel your needs are being met by the grouping system?

7. Which groups of students benefit the most (or least) from the grouping system?

Basic Procedures

Student attitudes toward grouping practices in the Hubbard Junior High School, the Maxson Junior High School, and the Plainfield Senior High School were investigated by a team of six interviewers, three Black and three White. Interviewers sought to determine the students' evaluation of the programs and services provided the several ability groups in the schools. A major objective was the obtaining of frank and honest answers from the students. Accordingly, Black interviewers met with Black students while White interviewers were assigned to White students. On two occasions Black and White interviewers met jointly with groups of Black and White students.

Interviews were conducted in informal sessions with small groups of students. Students were grouped by ability level for most interviews. Ability groups in the junior high schools were "W" (high), "X" (middle), and "Y" (low). Senior high school groups were "W" (high), "X_2" (middle-high), "X_1" (middle-low), and "Y" (low). Several specialized groups at the high school were also interviewed. Two of the groups were composed of student "leaders." One leadership group was elected within the school; the second group were self-selected Black students who might be described as activists. Interviews were also held with groups of Black and White athletes.

Results of Inquiry Into Student Attitudes

Purposes of Ability Grouping

Students were found to be in general agreement with the expressed purpose of ability grouping -- the provision of differentiated educational experiences for groups of students with different abilities. Ideally all students should receive experiences of the same high quality, differing only in the rate and depth of presentation. In practice, few students felt the existing program and procedures adequately served the entire student population. Present programs were viewed as providing differing qualities of instruction for the various ability groups. The nearly universal opinion was that the existing program best serves high ability White students. General satisfaction with the programs for students of average ability was also expressed, although to a somewhat lesser degree. However, low ability pupils are given unsatisfactory educational experience in the students' view. Several students complained that the program for low ability groups was inferior.

There was general student criticism of grouping policies although motivations for criticism differed from individual to individual. Across grades, schools, and ethnic group students in the middle or average ability groups tended to be less critical of grouping practices than either the high or low groups. As might be expected, White students were less critical than Black students.

Criteria for Group Placement

Many students did not feel that ability was the key factor in determining the makeup of the various groups. Rather, in their eyes, motivation levels, parental support, and family background (income and education) were the critical elements. Several White students thought that the present groups were indicative of "true ability" or "intelligence," but Black students universally disagreed. They (Blacks) viewed placement practices as unjust and discriminatory. The objective criteria used for ability group placement were thought to be unfair because the tests used were inappropriate for Black students from a different cultural milieu.

Subjective criteria for ability group placement were also thought to be inequitable. Black students felt teachers and counselors were discriminatory in pupil placement. Several students felt their placement was a penalty for having improper attitudes or being activists during the schools' racial crisis.

Attitudes Toward Grouping Procedures

Placement in low ability groups was perceived as a depressant on the student's level of motivation. Grouping practices were characterized as rigid and the students saw only downward movement as possible. Students believed that motivation (rather than ability) was the critical factor in placement. The grouping program was also perceived as shaping the teacher's perceptions regarding the student's ability to learn. Students in high ability groups were seen as highly motivated and were thought to be encouraged to achieve. On the other hand, students in low ability groups were portrayed as extraordinarily discouraged and were thought to be ignored by the school.

Group placement appeared to have a strong influence on self-perception. High ability students saw themselves as fortunate and highly motivated; the great majority anticipated attending college. They regarded themselves as "hard workers" and were pleased with their placement. Black students in high ability groups expressed some ambivalence about their status. They (Blacks) were pleased with their achievements and enjoyed the stimulation of their classmates but were concerned that they had only minimal contacts with Black students of lesser academic abilities. They experienced conflict -- on the one hand there was pressure from parents and school authorities to excel, but there was also rejection from less fortunate Black students. Grouping procedures were believed to promote disunity among Blacks. Groupings enforced separation from Black peers and the students desired more extensive contacts during the school day.

Students in groups of average ability appeared more complacent. They did not feel the stigma associated with membership in the low ability groups. However, they did indicate a degree of uncertainty concerning their capabilities for performing on a par with those in the high ability groups.

Low ability groups had a high percentage of Black membership. These students, particularly the Blacks, felt oppressed and victimized. They were highly critical of what they perceive as the rigidity of the system. They believe that all effort to move upward in the grouping patterns are doomed to failure. Teachers and counselors have indicated that hard work and good grades are the key to success. In the student's view this upward movement has failed to materialize, regardless of their efforts. Accordingly, they have given up and expressed feelings of futility and entrapment. They indicated that the structure of the system operated in such a manner that low ability students were treated as dull, inferior, or stupid. Their post high school future was envisioned in terms of the armed forces, jobs with low prestige and low pay, or even employment.

Attitudes Toward Changing the Existing System

The majority of White students interviewed expressed some desire for effecting change in present grouping practices. They indicated that many students were deprived of the important social learnings that result from interchanges among different groups. They believed that greater heterogeneity of classes might assist in the reduction of racial tension. While these students were desirous of seeing improvements, they had few specific suggestions. Many felt that an abrupt change in the existing system might cause White students and teachers to consider leaving the school system.

A minority of White pupils supported the maintenance of present practices. They believed the present grouping system classified pupils fairly and that the students' needs were best served by homogeneous groups. It must be noted that these students were themselves members of either the "W" (high) or "X_2" (middle-high) groups.

Black students were more insistent on the need for modification of the present system and several advocated abolishment of existing practices. Again, there were few specific suggestions. Some students advocated complete heterogeneity while others suggested a system with two ability levels.

Attitudes Toward School Personnel

Dissatisfaction with grouping practices tended to color attitudes toward school personnel. Black students in particular were most critical. Blacks appeared to see the school and its personnel as opponents and were more adamant about the need for change.

As might be expected, much of the criticism focussed upon particular individuals. It is extremely difficult to give currency to these views since the motivations of the critics vary so widely. Many of these negative (and positive) sentiments are expressed by students in every school system.

There was one particular attitude that was so frequently verbalized that it must be reported. Nearly all of the students in Plainfield Senior High School were critical of the counselors. It must be clearly indicated that many students stated that there were too few counselors and that the resulting overload of students per counselor contributed to the lack of time that could be devoted to student needs. Despite this, Black students accused the counselors of discriminatory actions. They felt that counselors deliberately channeled Black students into lower tracks and scheduled Black students into non-academic courses with little justification. Black students felt they were discouraged from seeking admission to college or were counseled to seek admission only into Black colleges in the South.

General Attitudes Toward the Schools and School Environment

When Black students parcelled out the blame, it was aimed at adults rather than fellow students. From their perspective, Black students were seen as victims of a hostile system. Correspondingly, White students were perceived as recipients of quality education, because they were White and privileged. Although some White students were viewed as hostile, adults were generally held responsible for all that was faulty in the school experience. They were depicted as the purveyors of oppression and held the keys to success or failure for the students. Some students abstractly blamed the "system" or the "White man," but more often they focussed on particular administrators, teachers, counselors, and occasionally, the police.

Many White students were less than sympathetic with their fellow Blacks. In their eyes Black students were disruptive, hostile, and disinterested in school. Administrators and teachers were criticized for catering to the demands of Black students and were perceived to be acting out of fear. School authorites were critized for failing to control Black students. Police intervention was welcomed by White students with this outlook.

Black students felt the entire school environment was discriminatory. The schools were castigated for failing to provide greater opportunities. These students felt they could and would do better if they were given more of a chance. Equality of opportunity, improved instruction, and more individual encouragement and counseling were strongly supported. However, there was a great deal of pessimism about the likelihood of change. The "White system" was seen as providing for "Whites only." Given the frustration and militancy that appeared evident in the students interviewed, it would seem safe to predict that resistance to existing practices will continue. The question, "What's good about this school?", was posed to a group of Black students. "Us! Black Power! That's the only good thing about this school!"

Conclusion

While few specific recommendations have been made in this examination of student attitudes, several themes are apparent. The general dissatisfaction expressed by the students and their desire for change indicated that modification of existing policies on grouping seems warranted. If the sincerity and earnestness of the students interviewed is indicative of the caliber of the entire student body, it would be extremely valuable to involve students in the decisions that will be made. They should be permitted to express their opinions about any new proposals and should be encouraged to submit recommendations individually or in groups.

The desire and necessity for close and meaningful student involvement is the major conclusion that can be derived from this examination of student attitudes in Plainfield.

CHAPTER VI

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS REGARDING GROUPING PROCEDURES AND RELATED PRACTICES

Although the focal point of the Columbia survey has been the grouping of students for instruction in the Plainfield Public Schools, the survey team considered it important to devote attention to the attitudes and opinions of citizens of the community toward education as provided in Plainfield and specifically toward grouping practices. Indeed, the grouping issue has aroused such widespread attention and controversy in the community that it is essential that some explicit, albeit necessarily limited, attention be focused upon school-community relationships in this report.

It is important to emphasize from the outset that the following analysis of school-community relationships is predicted on only a small and admittedly limited questionnaire and interview sampling of Plainfield's citizenry. We sent questionnaires on a random basis to some five hundred families with youngsters enrolled in the Plainfield Public Schools and introduced some fifty representatives of various and diverse organizations in the City of Plainfield. We harbor no illusions about the comprehensiveness of our questionnaire or interview samples. Our purpose was merely to elicit from questionnaire and interview data some impressions of the community context within which the volatile issue of grouping was to be studied. The results of these questionnaires and interviews provided us with information upon which we based the recommendations found in the final pages of this section.

Our problem of gaining community perspective, of course, was compounded by the disorders in the high school which occurred in the midst of our study. An already volatile situation was exacerbated as groups became further polarized along racial lines. Our questionnaire was distributed and our interviewing occurred after the racial clashes at the high school so our information reflects more contemporary sentiments. We recognize, though, that the tempo of change in a sensitive urban center like Plainfield is such that an individual's opinion on controversial issues can vary from day to day as events occur with lightening speed and pervasive impact. A number of new groups have recently emerged as older groups have fragmented. The fluidity and lack of cohesion of organizational life in a racially troubled city like Plainfield must be accepted as being symptomatic of and almost endemic to the ferment of the contemporary urban scene. With these understandings set forth let us proceed to describe some of the more salient characteristics of school-community relationships in Plainfield.

Plainfield: Urban America in Microcosm

As the staff read back issues of the Courier-News to familiarize itself with the Plainfield situation, it became apparent that the history of public education in Plainfield in the decade of the nineteen-sixties was analogous to what has happened in dozens of cities throughout the country. The demographic changes which have altered the racial composition of larger cities like New York and Newark have also occurred in Plainfield. The percentage of Non-Whites in Plainfield increased from 13.6 per cent in 1950 to 22 per cent in 1960. In 1965, 26 per cent of Plainfield's population of 48,400 was Non-White. Population estimates for 1980 project that 40 per cent of Plainfield's population of 56,000 will be Non-White. It is not our purpose or function to comment here upon the oft-reiterated cycle of unemployment and under-employment which afflicts such inordinate numbers of Non-White citizens. The statistics reflecting changes in Plainfield's racial composition are mentioned only to stress again the significant fact that Plainfield today is a much different community than it was only a decade ago. Many of the criticisms of the school system which we heard emphasized the point that the City's schools had yet to adjust to the new demographic facts of life.

Our analysis of Plainfield's history during the past decade indicates vividly how the city's schools have been swept up in the dynamics of the civil rights revolution. Plainfield, indeed, in microcosm reflects the various and shifting thrusts of the racial revolution in the United States.

The Plainfield schools have been enmeshed in racial controversy since 1961 when civil rights groups first demanded an end to racial imbalance. The Board of Education, in response to civil rights pressure, approved the creation in 1961 of a Lay Advisory Committee to study the problem of racial imbalance in the City's elementary schools. This Committee in 1962 urged the appointment of consultants to advise the community on its problems of racial imbalance in the schools. The Committee and the Board of Education, as residents will recall, refuted the recommendations of the consultant (the Wolfe Plan) and the Board ultimately came up with its "6th Grade Plan" which was assailed by civil rights advocates as a much weaker effort to promote integration than the Wolfe Plan. On the other hand, other citizens of Plainfield were critical of the Board's "6th Grade Plan" as a first step towards erosion of the sanctity of the neighborhood school attendance pattern. We do not intend to trace chronologically or in any detai the history of litigation, Commissioner's decisions, demonstrations, and picketing which so permeated the school controversy in Plainfield in the early nineteen-sixties. Our point here merely is to place the Plainfield racial situation in its historical context and to stress the fact that developments in this small New Jersey City have not occurred in a vacuum but reflect national developments and nuances in the civil rights struggle. In the early nineteen sixties, for example, the thrust in civil rights in Plainfield and throughout urban America was focused upon achieving racial balance. As efforts to integrate schools have proven to be abortive in many Northern Cities in recent years, there has emerged more militant Black leadership which focuses much less or virtually no attention upon the goal of integration. Much of the current emphasis in Plainfield and elsewhere is to achieve Black power and identity in the social, political, economic, and educational spheres. Thus the present racial crisis in Plainfield is not unique but replicates the situation in scores of other cities.

Questionnaire and Interview Results

As we indicated earlier a brief questionnaire (see Appendix) was sent to five hundred families which had youngsters enrolled in the Plainfield Public Schools. We received more than one hundred and fifty responses, a remarkable return considering the brief time which the respondents had to complete the instrument and the fact that there was no follow-up communication. Under these conditions, this return of approximately one-third of the questionnaires which reached randomly selected parents (every nineteenth name was selected from a listing of the parents of all enrolled children) is testimony to the saliency of school issues in Plainfield.

The tables which follow represent a compilation of data derived from the questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information from parents on their perceptions of the Plainfield school system as it affects their children. The tables were arranged to indicate the responses to each item on the questionnaire; in all cases the data are arranged by percentages in each category.

Following the tables are brief comments on the data they contain supplemented when appropriate by relevant data required in the interviews.

TABLE 50

GENERAL COMMUNITY LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

How Satisfied Are You With The Plainfield School System As It Has Affected Your Own Children?

	White	Black
Very satisfied	50%	5%
Somewhat satisfied	24%	25%
Somewhat dissatisfied	9%	27%
Very dissatisfied	6%	29%
Undecided	10%	14%

The dramatic difference between Black and White respondents in terms of satisfaction with the way in which the Plainfield School System is serving their children is made abundantly clear in the table above. Whereas 74% of the White parents responding were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied, only 30% of the Black respondents indicated any degree of satisfaction.

TABLE 51

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF THE ADEQUACY OF THE GROUPING SYSTEM

How Well Do You Think The Present Grouping System Serves The Educational Needs Of The Following Types Of Children?

		Very Well	Fairly Well	Not Well	Poorly
Ages 6-9	B	14%	38%	21%	28%
	W	47%	38%	5%	10%
Ages 10-14	B	9%	40%	23%	28%
	W	41%	38%	12%	9%
Ages 15-18	B	7%	36%	27%	30%
	W	46%	26%	17%	11%
Black Children	B	3%	23%	25%	49%
	W	32%	27%	22%	19%
White Children	B	25%	34%	21%	20%
	W	39%	44%	9%	8%
High income children	B	35%	35%	14%	16%
	W	41%	48%	4%	7%
Middle income children	B	13%	55%	16%	16%
	W	41%	43%	8%	6%
Low income children	B	3%	21%	31%	46%
	W	36%	28%	17%	19%
Children with high intelligence	B	44%	28%	16%	14%
	W	60%	29%	2%	9%
Children with average intelligence	B	14%	50%	19%	17%
	W	44%	36%	12%	8%
Children with low intelligence	B	5%	13%	35%	47%
	W	34%	24%	21%	21%

B-Black W-White

The table above reveals the degree to which Black and White parents feel that the present grouping system serves the educational needs of various categories of students. A clear analysis can easily be made by the reader. One generalization certainly is warranted. White parents believe that the grouping system is far more important to meeting the educational needs of all categories of students than did Black parents.

Results of the interviews support the findings reported from the questionnaires. There were interviewers who took strong stands on both sides of the question, with Blacks regularly being more negative toward groupings than Whites. Conventional rationale was used to support both the pro and the con positions. Those who were pro-grouping thought reducing the range of ability and achievement within a class provided a better learning situation and resulted in fairer competition. They further thought that grouping should not be made a racial issue. Those who were against grouping felt that the plan was unfairly administrated, that grouping caused substantial racial segregation, that assignment to groups placed social labels on students, and that grouping does little to improve the learning situation.

It should also be pointed out that a large number of the interviewers felt that generally people in the community didn't actually understand the present policies and practices related to grouping in the Plainfield schools.

TABLE 52

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF INFORMATION

Generally Speaking, How Well Informed Do You Think You Are About School Matters That Affect Your Children?

	Black	White
Very well informed	28%	30%
Quite well informed	38%	59%
Not well informed	22%	11%
Poorly informed	12%	--

From the table above it is listed that 89% of the White respondents and 66% of the Black respondents felt either very well informed or quite well informed. There is a significant difference between Blacks and Whites but both percentages seem amazingly high,given the extensive criticism expressed by interviewers,over the fact that they were poorly informed and had no channels for dialogue between the community and school officials. As a matter of fact,the lack of opportunity for any significant involvement in working on school problems and the general lack of responsiveness of school officials to community attitudes and wishes were the foci of the most intense criticism expressed in interviews.

TABLE 53

ACTION WHEN DISSATISFIED

If You Were Dissatisfied With The Situation Of Your Child At School, Would You Feel Free To Go To The School And Complain?

	Black	White
Yes	86%	93%
No	11%	7%
Don't know	3%	--

Apparently almost all parents feel free to go to the school and complain if they are dissatisfied with the way their child is getting along in school. It would have been interesting to have included a follow-up question of whether the parents thought their complaint would improve the situation but no such question was asked. Based on the interviews, however, it seems likely that only a small percentage of those who said they felt free to complain would have expected it to do appreciable good.

TABLE 54

PROGRAMS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

How Helpful Do You Think Each Of The Following Would Be In Improving Relations Between The Schools And Parents In Plainfield?

		Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful
Stronger PTA, more frequent meetings	B	32%	46%	22%
	W	8%	54%	38%
More open school or open house evenings	B	49%	35%	16%
	W	14%	56%	30%
More school-community coordinators	B	67%	28%	5%
	W	35%	38%	27%
Guidance counselors available in evenings	B	67%	30%	3%
	W	56%	30%	14%
Parent-educator groups formed to work together on educational problems and advise Board of Education	B	72%	28%	---
	W	57%	28%	15%
Scheduled individual parent-teacher meetings at the school	B	76%	21%	2%
	W	60%	34%	6%
Regular home visits with parents by teacher	B	48%	32%	20%
	W	27%	36%	37%
Improved printed material and announcements from the school	B	61%	28%	11%
	W	39%	41%	20%
Other	B	18%		
	W	27%		

B-Black W-White

It does not seem necessary to comment on the table above item by item. It is important to point out that the responses suggest a strong need for divising better ways for school people and parents to relate to each other. Indeed some of the possible ways are indicated in the table and the very substantial support that such arrangements are given by the parents responding to the questionnaire.

TABLE 57

YEARS IN SCHOOLS

How Many Years Have You Had Children Attending The Plainfield Schools?

	Black	White
1-3 years	35%	31%
4-9 years	46%	31%
10+ years	19%	38%

Table 57 reveals that substantially more White parents have had their children in Plainfield schools for ten years or more. This only bears out the point made earlier about the changing racial composition of Plainfield.

TABLE 58

RESIDENCE PLANS

Do You Intend To Live In Plainfield Until Your Children Complete High School?

	Black	White
Yes	65%	56%
No	23%	35%
Qualified	12%	9%

TABLE 59

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

If You Now Have Children In Elementary Or Junior High School, Do You Intend To Have Them Attend Plainfield High School?

	Black	White
Yes	60%	38%
No	26%	40%
Qualified	14%	22%

Table 58 indicates that somewhat more Black than White parents expect to continue living in Plainfield until their children complete high school but this difference is small as compared to the difference revealed in Table 59 concerning plans for children to complete high school in the Plainfield School System. Sixty per cent of the Black parents expect their children to complete Plainfield High School but only 38 per cent of White parents expressed such expectation. These data further support the claim that Plainfield schools will continue to change in racial balance and an increasing larger percentage of the student body will be Black.

TABLE 60

INCOME

In Which Of The Following Categories Does Your Family Income Fall For The Past Year?	Black	White
Under $9,000	37%	11%
Under $9,000-$15,999	46%	56%
Under $16,000+	17%	33%

The data in this table are significant in that 63% of the Black respondents report an annual income of $9,000 or more. This being the case would suggest that the difference between Blacks and Whites in earlier tables is much more attributable to race than economic status.

Some Recommendations

At the outset we stated the limitations of our analysis of school-community relations in Plainfield. Despite these caveats and the limitations of our survey, we do feel that our questionnaire and interview data provide us with some defensible insights. The first recommendation which follows is derived directly from the data collected. The second and third recommendations relate less directly to the data but are believed to be sound propositions for consideration.

Recommendation 1
Improved Communications with the Community

Time and again the Plainfield School System was criticized for its poor communications with the public. Citizens both Black and White complained about alleged lack of responsiveness. We suggest that the Board as quickly as possible establish advisory groups composed of citizens and professional staff members at the school building level throughout the system. These groups should work on school problems within the school district and when appropriate should channel citizen queries, complaints and recommendations to the Board of Education. Special efforts should be made to involve Negro citizens who more than other groups feel isolated and bemoan the lack of access to Plainfield's educational decision-makers. The Board should make every effort to respond more directly to citizens' complaints and queries in its efforts to increase meaningful community participation.

The Board of Education should also consider initiating several system-wide citizen task force groups. These groups might be composed of parents, students, and teachers of both races. The groups could be relatively large - 15-20 each - and they might address themselves to problems such as effective school-community relations, student evaluation procedures in the Plainfield schools, discipline, finance, or the use of drugs in the schools. The task force groups should report directly to the Board with their recommendations and advice. The reports of these citizen task force groups should receive priority attention on the agenda of the Board of Education at its meetings and should be widely discussed throughout the community.

To broaden further parental participation the Board might consider appointing a Parents Advisory Committee. This Advisory Committee comprised of perhaps two or three parents from each of Plainfield's schools might serve as the community's educational "ombudsman." The members could have the authority to investigate problems, open lines of communication, and serve in a liaison capacity between the community and the school system. As advisors to the Board of Education, this Parents Advisory Committee would have the authority to make suggestions to the Board of Education. One of the major problems facing Board members, namely, the lack of time to devote to school matters, might be mitigated by the creation of such a Parents Advisory Committee whose membership hopefully would consist of many White and Black women who would be more able to devote more substantial time to pressing educational problems than the busy business and professional people currently serving on the Board of Education.

The creation of task force groups and local school advisory groups could serve to broaden the base of community representation in educational decision making. In these times of demands for broader participation in the decision-making process, these groups could serve as agents through which demands from groups which now consider themselves unrepresented, could be recognized, articulated, legitimized, and dealt with.

The school system in its efforts to broaden parental and community participation in school affairs should hold more open house nights, when parents can visit the school and meet teachers, counselors and principals. Members of the suggested local school Advisory Committees might work at the building level with principals and teachers in setting up appropriate programs and convenient times for meetings.

We are stressing here the urgent need in Plainfield to maximize parental involvement in school affairs. School professionals should be receptive to the critical need for this increased school-community interaction. Educators should not view parental participation defensively as an intrusion upon their professional prerogatives but as an essential input towards more effective education. Schools in cities like Plainfield will either have to involve the community meaningfully or face incessant conflict with alienated parents and the citizen groups.

Recommendation 2
The Board Should Establish Closer and More Institutionalized Relationships With Other Governmental Agencies in Plainfield

Plainfield has a range of complex social, economic, political, and educational problems which are common to urban areas throughout the nation. The mitigation of interrelated problems like poverty, race relations, inferior housing, unemployment and under-employment, require the coordination of all governmental agencies. No single agency of government has the capacity to solve these multi-faceted problems unilaterally. The schools, for example, have relatively little or no control over pivotal areas like housing or job opportunities.

Recent efforts to reform and unify city government by making municipal authority less fragmented in Plainfield should be supported. School officials should strive to establish closer working relationships with the city's top officials whose offices represent to the community the best opportunity to effectuate the coordinated planning and coherent overall policy so desperately needed. Schools which are isolated and insulated from general government in urban America are anachronistic.

The city's application on April 15, 1968 to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, for example, represents the type of thinking that is now necessary in urban centers like Plainfield. In this impressive proposal for a Model Cities planning grant the need for coordinated approaches and interrelated programs was specifically enunciated. Sub-committees were established in the following areas:

1. Health
2. Recreation
3. Physical Improvement and Housing
4. Education
5. Crime Reduction
6. Social Services and Employment

Educational officials should support such concerted efforts and should welcome the opportunity to work cooperatively with other agencies in solving mutual problems.

Recommendation 3
Greater Community Attention Should Be Focused Upon Regional and Statewide Approaches to the Mitigation of Plainfield's Problems

It is patently clear that even if the Plainfield Board of Education followed the aforementioned suggestions and established better patterns of communications with the community and closer working relationships with municipal government that its ability to meaningfully improve the situation would still be rather limited. The city of Plainfield simply lacks the fiscal resources to handle its problems unilaterally. The property tax in the city is already inordinately high when compared to adjacent communities. Recent events have compounded the city's fiscal problems as it may become increasingly difficult to broaden the tax base by attracting new industry to a racially troubled city.

The racial polarization described in the Kerner Commission report is certainly ffecting Plainfield as a White suburban noose tightens around the city's neck. As Plainfield's schools become more heavily Negro, middle class Whites may flee to suburbia in a demographic pattern that is frighteningly national in scope. Efforts to achieve racial integration in schools which have been blunted by recent manifestations of Black power, will be successful only if regional approaches to school problems are pursued. The likelihood of more affluent, predominantly White communities like Scotch Plains, Westfield, South Plainfield, and North Plainfield, voluntarily agreeing to integrate their resources and student bodies with Plainfield is, needless to say, rather remote. The chances of effectuating such regional approaches through the political process are equally remote. These efforts, though, must continue despite their minimal chances for success in today's political climate.

Only massive state and federal incentive dollars will successfully achieve the regionalized approach to educational problems so desperately needed. Indeed, more residents of Plainfield must be apprised of these unpleasant facts of fiscal life. Particular pressures must be placed on Trenton to respond to the needs of the nation's most urbanized state. The low level of state support for education in New Jersey is inexcusable. More extensive political pressure must be focused on the state government to provide the resources so desperately needed in cities like Plainfield.